

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN."

BOOK I.

CHAPTER XIV. AN ANGRY WALK HOME.

WITH this speech ringing in his ears like a bell, Mr. Tillotson went home that night almost elated. He seemed to hear it over and over again: he repeated it to himself—meditated on it. It seemed to resolve a secret for him—*about* to resolve it: to dispel a mystery that might have hung around him like a cloud. He was almost elated, and found himself looking on the little town with a sort of reverence and affection which he had not felt before. He wandered a long time about the old cathedral, looking up to it tranquilly, mentally resting within its shadows, scarcely able to make up his mind to go home. Suddenly he heard a step behind him, as if some one was running to overtake him, and, looking round, he saw Ensign Ross. But it was Ensign Ross with wild eyes of fury and inflamed cheeks.

"Ah! I have found you alone," he said, panting. "I was sure you had slipped away home. But you are doing the romantic there, it seems."

"And what do you want?" said Mr. Tillotson, stopping calmly. "You can have nothing to say to me."

"Haven't I, Mr. Banker!" the other answered. "Then you are wrong. There is no foolish woman here to protect you, before whom you can speak so mildly and gently. A nice protection—a fine opportunity of showing off!"

"I do not want to quarrel with you," said Mr. Tillotson, still calmly, and moving across the grass towards the path. "We had better not talk any more to-night."

"Don't be alarmed," said the other. "Don't fear for yourself. This is not a lonely place. There is the old watchman passing by. A cry of yours would reach every one of these windows. See! there is some one actually looking out. There is no violence going to be done."

For the first time for many months of his life Mr. Tillotson became impatient.

"What right have you to speak to me in this way, or in the way you have done since I have come here? I have borne much from you—too

much. I have made what amends I could for what I did under a mistake. I have told you again and again that I am deeply sorry for it. And now that I look back, I can see no reason why I should. I must ask you to say what you want with me, at once, or I shall not stay another moment."

They were walking on together. People in their little old-fashioned windows—some of which had diamond panes, and were embroidered round and round with ivy and moss, and where lights were twinkling—thought that these were two gentlemen walking home pleasantly after dinner.

"Do I want to keep you or to talk with you? But I just want to tell you something very plainly. I have been watching you from the moment you came here. I am not a man to put up with interference of any sort from soft gentlemen or from bold insolent fellows! I can meet both in their own way. You think because you found out that I was falling in the world—that you, with your banker's money and your brass shovels and cheques—that you could step in and put that girl against me! That was fine generous conduct!" (His tone was already softened.)

"That girl?" said Mr. Tillotson. "Miss Ada Millwood?"

"Yes. Oh, how astonished you are. Not that I care much for her, or that I believe that she cares for me. She's a weak creature, with no mind or character. But still one of these days, perhaps, I might have changed my mind. I may have my designs about that woman. She was in some sort *mine*, and you saw it. You *did*! You thought I was *down*! And I suppose, because the world chose to turn against me, and banking fellows and usurers to strip me of everything, you thought you would come in with the rest, and that I should be too weak, too "down" to resist you. But I am *not*, sir, and you shall find that I am not, sir."

He planted himself suddenly in front of Mr. Tillotson. The people in the old windows, just going to bed, thought these were two jocular minor canons going home full of spirits.

Mr. Tillotson met his gaze. "I see you are one of those who mistake good nature and indulgence for fear. I do not understand your threats; nor do I mind them. I will only tell you this. You might have made a friend of me. I was willing to help you. But I see your real character now. Even one who may have had some

interest in you, you have succeeded in turning against you. *She* has seen your character too."

"How *dare* you!" said the other, with a trembling voice. "Now listen to me. For all your air of triumph, you have not tricked me as yet, even with your money and banker's work. No, nor shall not. Now take this warning, I advise you!"

Mr. Tillotson tossed his head impatiently, and turned away.

"I may have to leave this place—this cursed place—and I am glad of it. They may be too much for me—for the moment only. But I shall get the better of them in a month or two. I am not to be beaten by the world or by money, or by *mild schemers* even. Now take this warning. Go away, too, or by Heaven if I hear a whisper of any tricks like what you have been at these few weeks, I'll come back from any quarter of the world and give you a lesson. There! you'll think this all disappointed love, and that sort of thing. But it's *my* pride, I can tell you. *You* a rival indeed! You shake your cheque-book in a foolish country girl's eyes, and of course—Think of your age and looks, my friend! Look at the matter calmly in your bank parlour."

"This sort of speech has no effect on me," the other replied, calmly. "Only a madman would talk as you do. But I shall tell you this openly and fairly, as an answer to your 'warnings.' What I have seen of you to-night, and before to-night, would lay an obligation on me to try and save a poor sweet gentle amiable girl from what would be sheer misery and destruction. My answer to your warning, therefore, is another warning. And how little I fear your threats you will find out from my behaviour, or from whoever you leave behind you to watch it."

He walked away calmly, leaving the other speechless with fury. The lady in the old moss-covered window, just putting out her light, thought that the two jocular canons had said good night in the most friendly way, and had gone home to their canons' roosts.

Thus did the days wear on at St. Alans, until it came to the day or so before the assizes began. Mr. Tillotson found a strange calm and quietness in the place, and also a fascination, the charm of which he could not bring himself to break. He even fell into Mr. Tilney's raptures, and began to look on "the grand old cathedral" itself with a dreamy interest. The picture of that evening, when *she* was playing the solemn old organ, was in itself a sweet dream. He put off his departure from day to day, and even welcomed Mr. Tilney's eager importunities. That old man of fashion, for all his platitudes, really liked him. He told him all his heavy troubles and anxieties in the most cheerful and enjoyable way. It was only when he spoke of trifles that he grew desponding.

"How about the bank, Tillotson?" asked Mr. Tilney, one morning.

"I have nearly all the business settled," said Mr. Tillotson. "In fact, I must be going in a day or two."

"Ah, of course you must," said Mr. Tilney, despondingly. "This is not the place for you—for any of us. Gentlemen don't do in country towns. The air stifles me, you understand. I wish to goodness, Tillotson, I was out of this hole."

Mr. Tillotson did not press his companion with the inconsistency of this statement with other declarations; but said it seemed to him to be a calm, retired place, where one could be very happy. "I would change with you with all my heart. One could grow fond of this quiet common and of the old cathedral opposite."

"Ah," continued Mr. Tilney, moodily, "it is very fine—very well—in its way, you know, for the men who draw the good salaries to wear lawn and keep up the thing. They're all common creatures, you see: know no more of the world than the big brass eagle in the choir. But for a man like me, who has been in the clubs, sir, and seen a better class of thing altogether, it don't come natural. H.R.H. the late Dook said to me once or twice, in his short way, 'Put you in the country, Tilney! Put you in strait-waistcoat!'"

As they drew near to the house, he noticed Mr. Tilney looking out nervously, and shading his eyes anxiously. "Do you see, Tillotson?" he asked. "My eyes are not so good. But is that Still or Canby—eh, now?"

"No, no," said Mr. Tillotson, looking; "seems more a sort of tradesman."

A little twitch passed over Mr. Tilney. "Ah, very good," he said. "A small account, you know. I declare, of all the hole-and-corner dunning places, these wretched towns are the worst! They are none of 'em gentlemen—no mutual trust—no confidence; but owe these mean, pitiful, abo—abo—what's the word—rignines, fourpence-halfpenny, and they send two dozen times for it. On my immortal soul they do, Tillotson. I'm getting sick of it."

This was a strange burst from him, and in the mean time he had mechanically turned round, and said, with a cautious air, "There is a view, Tillotson, of that old place yonder, at the back there, which you can't find the match of from this to the Alhambra. Noble, noble, sir. Just come with me. Softly, softly, sir." And, taking his friend's arm, he began to walk back almost on tiptoe, as if for the proper effect it was necessary—the old fane nodding, as it were, and not to be awakened.

In a moment, however, Mr. Tilney's quick ear heard heavy steps, and he turned back sharply. "Another time, Tillotson," he said; "far better another time. Don't ask me now;" as if the old fane had wakened up and caught them in the act. "Excuse me, Tillotson," he went on; "only a moment—I quite forgot our friend."

"Our friend" was unmistakably pursuing them, and running too. Mr. Tilney almost ran to meet him with his arm and stick up, adroitly made him turn back, and, looking round occasionally, showed a joyous and jocund face, as if he were discoursing on some amusing topic. But Mr. Tillotson knew well all that was underneath, even if he had not noticed the surly, blunt,

and defiant air of our friend, who stopped occasionally and tossed his head, and—in spite of deprecating gesture on Mr. Tilney's part—raised his voice, and sent back to Mr. Tillotson's ear a loud and angry "Once for all, I tell you, Mr. Tilney."

In short, he could read off at once that poor Mr. Tilney was a player in the dismal drama of DEBT, and, as a genteel Sisyphus, was daily rolling the heart-breaking stone of APPEARANCES up the steep ways of EMBARRASSMENT. In a second, and with a pang, for he thought of the golden-haired girl, he saw the whole course of their life, and what a strand of genteel misery was woven in with it.

He turned away and walked round as if to see by himself that "back view" of the old cathedral which rivalled the Alhambra. In the absence of his guide, he could not find this special vista. But, after making a complete circuit, he came suddenly on the house. The tradesman was there still, in the porch, his voice reaching to Mr. Tillotson at the little gate. But there was another voice, soft, silvery, musical, modulated to expostulation and entreaty. A glint of the sunshine passing through the trellis-work of the porch came upon that golden hair and lit it up, and then, with another instinct, Mr. Tillotson read off another secret of the inner life of this family; how this sweet-tongued girl was put forward as the Intercessor and Mediatrix, to shield the persecuted family. He had it all before him, as if he knew them for years. Even now the pleading voice of the Mediatrix was having its effect, the indignant tradesman was grumbling, and, defending himself, had presently put on his hat, and walked away past Mr. Tillotson, sulkily.

CHAPTER XV. THE ASSIZES.

THERE was a good deal of stir in the assize town that evening. It surged over with the waters of ecclesiastical and legal society. A stream of both was gurgling through the place. Gowns of two sorts fluttered in the air. It was known that the judges had arrived—with the traditional pageantry—brought in, at a slow pace, as if under a strong guard, surrounded with a crowd, and looking gloomily out of the carriage windows, like state prisoners being conveyed to the Tower. From various second floors over the festive grocers' shops, looked out healthy, large-cheeked, large-whiskered faces, the hands in relation to which were in pockets; barristerial faces and barristerial hands. Some were leaning against the window-frame with their barristerial feet up on the sill, others talking to short wiry monastic-looking men, the whole of which represented an eminent counsel receiving "instructions" from a local agent.

Mr. Justice Buckstone and Mr. Baron Hodder were at their lodgings, about which a little crowd hung—and where, too, they were regarded with a reverence and a submission almost abject, as though they took their commission from a power higher than the Queen. Round through the town, dispersed in various

first floors, were the numerous members of the circuit. Serjeant Ryder, Mr. Cobham, Q.C., Mr. Wrigley, Q.C., Mr. Colter, Q.C., Belmore Jones, the well-known popular counsel, who was as necessary to every breach of promise case as the writ itself or one of the issues, and who defended Chartists and others "fearlessly," and with great speeches. But he had so often thrown his head back, and told judges melodramatically that he "stood there to vindicate" innumerable rights, punctilios, and etiquettes, and knew, on so many occasions, what was due "to the gown he had the honour and privilege to wear on his back," that he had been looked coldly on as a forward and troublesome person, and had not been honoured with the mystic letters at the end of his name. These being so dispersed through the place, were regarded with a lesser and more subdued reverence, Mr. Cobham, Mr. Exshaw, Mr. Serjeant Ryder, known as "the Serjeant," Mr. Wrigley, Mr. Colter, all her Majesty's counsel, together with Bagely, Gibbs, and the juniors in good business, were instantly, and almost before they had time to get from the railway or take off their coats, invaded by gentlemen with papers; and "the Serjeant," in about five minutes, had his hands in his trousers-pockets, walking up and down the room (his characteristic mode of laying his mind to a case), listening to his junior's voice, which comes struggling through perfect billows of white briefs. The old cathedral town and some of our canons made a little first floor profit during this invasion, thus wakened up into a sort of owl-like animation; and in all its nooks, and closes, and niches, and quiet rusted corners, seemed to nod and flap, and softly hoot with a mild ecclesiastical bustle. But the grander scene was when half-past six drew on, and this legal aristocracy was seen, still with its hands in its pockets, crowding to the White Hart to dine; where they were to sit down some forty or fifty strong; where was the Bar sherry and the Bar port—much relished by the legal babes. But Colter, pale and worn, and with faint eyes, was already wandering away to Whichelo's Trusts, lying on his table at the lodgings, or to Mill's case, which was to be "on" first in the morning.

But as Sunday intervenes—supposed reasonably to be a Day of Rest for all but poor Colter and Bolt—it is worth while going up to the cathedral to see the legal service for once. Through all the monotony of Sunday after Sunday, and the choristers and minor canons every day at three, without change and the most wearisome sameness, and Fagle with his "heart panting," this is a very agreeable break. Mrs. Toplady and her daughters get on their best and go. Dissenting ladies even, drawn by natural curiosity, go off also "to see the judges." Across the green lawn in the Close the lines of company seemed to trail and converge like gay ribbons. The sun was out. The choir was full. The vast clothes-presses seemed to creak under the load, for every rank and every tier were filled, and the rows of gay bonnets and dresses were parted by the long bands of dark

black oak, and the light coming through the pale yellow and paler greens of the great windows, dappled over the two heads of the two judges who sat together in stalls of honour, imparting a regular saint's "nimbus" to the chalky well-worn face of Mr. Baron Hodder, and comically laying what seemed a little dab of crimson gore right on the bald crown of the rubicund and oily Mr. Justice Buckstone. They had been brought in by the dean himself, and stalled helplessly, and a great Prayer-book thrust into their hands. All dotted about were praying barristers, with their large serious faces, and whiskers spread like black sails, for whom, indeed, those benches and stalls seemed but another shape of court; and if any one had pulled the dreamy Colter from behind, whose thoughts were still at his lodgings noting Whicelo's Trusts, and whispered that it was time, he would have almost risen and "moved" their lordships on the spot.

Mr. Baron Hodder, the Criminal Judge, with his eyes on his great book, was also wandering off to a terrible shooting case which was to be on before him, which had been committed on the verge of two counties; for he knew that Jones, the "Dock" counsel, would have "a point" about the indictment and "the five hundred yards" required by the statute, and he was thinking what "he would do with it;" all which speculations were disturbed by the music—the sublime anthem, "For the Lord is a Just Judge," set specially by Bliss, Mus. Doc., Oxon, and at which he was now straining and creaking, and snatching at pegs and handles left and right, and trampling the very souls out of pedals underneath—and by the sweet chirruping bleat of Fugle, whose eyes, like all other eyes in the place, turning to the right to make proper effect on the stall of honour, rose and fell; and he sometimes seemed to smile in his singing and droop his head sadly, as who should say, "Now all is finish—ed; let me be transfigured and assum—ed, forthwith, into my place in the heavenly mansions!"

But the judges did not care for music, at first merely looking for a moment curiously at Doctor Fugle as they would at a new witness just entering the box; and so Fugle bleated his bleat mournfully, and the other seraphic canons came in tumultuously, and Bliss, tumbling and surging in over all, sent down monster billows of sounds that swelled through the aisles, and went floating up the towers and groined roofs, and actually made the black oak benches under the judges quiver and tremble with the vibration. And then, though Bliss's music was poor, and the singers, separately, theatrical and affected, the grand old organ—in which were some of the Dutch Silbermann's pipes, rich, ripe, mellow, and celestial, and the fresh voices of children, and the union of all, and the associations of the place—triumphed over everything; and, as it rolled past the stalls of honour, made the Coke upon Lyttleton which each judge had bound up in him as a heart, thrill for a moment and look up with pleasure.

It was altogether a delight to the inhabitants. Mrs. Tilney and her family went up in procession to the cathedral, and perhaps the ladies of her family took stock of the barristerial company and the flowing whiskers; for Mr. Tilney, up at the White Hart, only the night before, had had brown sherry with one of the Benjamins of the society, and obtained from him an exact list and description of the gentlemen of the Bar then in town. This youth, who was voluble and eager, gave him little short sketches of each, after the manner of the obituary notices, and these meagre outlines Mr. Tilney could readily fill out from his own sources of information. He came back mysteriously to his family.

"Do you know who is here, my dears? Young Tilbury, son of old Sir Thomas. Dear me! has sent him to the Bar. Second son, of course; but, if he pleases, Sir Thomas, you know—I like a young fellow's carving out a way for himself. And there's Harris, in very fair business, too. I am sure it's the same. It's nice, isn't it?"

Ross was there with his friend, restless, fuming, biting his nails, and with his eyes fixed, now on the judges, now on Mr. Paget, his own working counsel.

Mr. Cobham, the leader, was at his lodgings, as indeed was Serjeant Ryder, and other leading counsel, who were too busy to afford time for these showy pious exercises—in truth, the serjeant was away on the hills taking a bracing walk and a quiet cigar.

At the door Mr. Ross commented on this. "Such hypocrites!" he said. "Setting up to be holy fellows, and pretending piety! Such cant! What do they care for those fellows' praying, or for that old whining dean's long-winded talk? That's the way they swindle us of our money, and go idling about the place instead of minding their business. It's an infernal shame! And then they tell me the other fellows are up at their lodgings hammering away at their business."

His friend Grainger, on whose arm he was leaning, and whose staring eyes searched every face that passed them by, struck in with his subdued growl:

"Well 'fee'd,' indeed, and then won't work! A regular set of impostors! The rule should be, No cure, no pay."

The Tilney family were standing close by the ancient porch—where, indeed, all the congregation were loitering—to see the distinguished strangers come out. Mr. Tilney was with them. As the judges passed in custody of an eager sheriff, hurrying them to the carriage, Ross, still biting his fingers, devoured Mr. Justice Buckstone with his eyes. "There he is," he said to his companion; "and that bladder-chop creature is to deal with our case. I wish it was the other."

"He looks a lounging fellow," said his friend. "Takes his work easy, you may depend."

Suddenly Ross saw Mr. Tillotson talking to Ada Millwood; and, dropping his friend's arm, strode up to them with a sour face. That ugly cicatrice was still there, though he had been

plastering it industriously day and night. It would not be gone for months.

"Oh," she said, as he came up, "listen to this, William. Mr. Tillotson has been asking some of the lawyers at the hotel about the case——"

Ross scowled at the other's feet. "I had rather not," he said, "have my case talked about, or asked about among the barristers. I have paid counsel."

Mr. Tillotson smiled, and unconsciously his gentle eye fell upon the cicatrice. The other felt it on him.

"Well," he asked, "I dare say it has been injured enough by all this gossiping about the place. I wish people would leave me and my affairs alone. Of course they mean well, and all that kind of cant."

Mr. Tillotson smiled. "I thought you would like to know the exact moment of its coming on. This was the judges' registrar, and he says about one to-morrow, as there is only a short case before it."

The girl's face fell. "So near at hand!" she said. "Oh, it is dreadful! How shall we bear the suspense of the day? Do, ah, let me ask you once, and Mr. Tillotson joins us all, do settle it as they want you."

"He joins you, does he?" said he. "And so I must settle, must I? It's enough to have it in one's mind, without being persecuted in this infernal way. He joins you, does he? Well?"

Mr. Cater, his solicitor, was beside him, motioning to a tired-looking, shabby, tall, and stooped gentleman who was near him. "Mr. Cobham, sir, wishes a word with you. To know you, in fact."

With suspicion in his eyes, Ross went over to him, and the three walked away slowly over the graves. He came back presently, and overtook the Tilney party, now nearly at their own door.

"Every one thinks they have a right to dictate to me—to give me lessons; but I had better stop it at once, and give notice, once for all, that I will not be pestered in this way. That seedy mole of a pettifogger, who has got my guineas in his pocket, must needs come up to me with his advice about 'settling.' Settling! Such a croak! croak! Settle from an old mildewed anatomy as that! It's infernally impudent of him, a trading fellow like that; and indeed I told him nearly as much."

"Oh, William," said Ada, eagerly, "you see them. Everybody says it. They must be right. Will you not listen? You are only preparing wretchedness for yourself. Mr. Grainger, you have influence over him. Stop this insanity."

The Indian-looking man rolled his wild eyes, and put the end of his wilder moustache into his mouth to chew. "I believe there is something in that," he said; "but when Ross takes a thing into his head, you might as well preach to that headstone there."

"Do you believe him?" said Ross, scornfully. "A fellow that has all but lost the shirt off his back at those German hells, and would pawn his soul for money; isn't he likely to be for double or quits—eh? Don't talk to me, and I make it as a favour Mr.—Mr. Tillotson,

that *you* won't be worrying the lawyers about my affairs. I want no one—*no* one—to be meddling in my concerns. I'm not in the humour for it, I give warning. If they will, damn it, I'll *have* to give 'em a lesson."

And, with fury in his eyes, he turned away. It was a very restless Sunday for him; and all the rest of the day he was prowling about nervously, haunting his solicitor, and taking wild quick walks over the hills. Over the Tilney mansion, all through that day, was cast a sense of gloom and uneasiness.

UNDER FIRE.

In the campaigns that immediately followed the Indian Mutiny in 1857, I, a very young soldier, newly arrived in India, was attached to a small field force which had been left to guard an important point in the line of communication of the main army under Sir Colin Campbell. I was naturally very impatient to see some actual fighting, nor had I long to wait.

The point we had to guard was threatened by a very powerful force of the enemy, who were evidently watching their opportunity to sweep down on our small force (we were only fifteen hundred strong). Day by day reports came in of their nearer approach, till at last one evening they were known to be in position only three miles in front of our camp. The officer in command of our column determined to take the initiative next morning, and attack, and, if possible, compel them to retreat. I well remember the peculiar thrill I experienced, when told by a staff-officer that evening what had been decided on. In spite of my previous eagerness, it was impossible to help feeling serious at the thought that the morrow must see us engaged in a deadly conflict. I certainly felt no reluctance to fight—on the contrary, I felt rather elated at the thought that at last I was a soldier in earnest; but I am not ashamed to confess that I slept little that night. All my past life rose before me. I thought how much better I could spend it, if I had it over again. To a person who has never been face to face with death, the prospect of a certain impending danger is rather appalling, and so I found it. I was astonished at two or three acquaintances—old campaigners—who seemed to treat it as a matter of course, and puffed their cheroots as coolly as if they were in the smoking-room of the "Rag." I did not know then that it is only before one's first action one treats the matter seriously; that when once the ice has been broken, fighting comes very much as a matter of course, and is looked forward to by most people as a kind of pleasant excitement.

After listening to the challenges of the sentries and the howling of the jackals for the greater part of the night, it was a relief when, about an hour before daylight, the camp was quietly roused and the tents struck. In a very short time the men had quietly fallen in. The morning air was very cold, and, as no fires were allowed, the ration of rum and biscuit which

was served out as our breakfast was very agreeable. The regimental band then struck up, and everybody began to look more cheerful as the sun rose. For my part, I could not help feeling sad as I thought how many of our band who were then looking at that sunrise would never see the sunset.

A reconnoitring party had gone forward to ascertain the enemy's exact position; on its return, we got the order to march. The bands struck up their liveliest airs, and we stepped out merrily. It was one of the lovely bright mornings of the Indian cold weather, and the motion and bracing air soon dispelled all gloomy reflections. The only thing calculated to damp the spirits was the long train of doolies for the wounded, that followed ominously in our wake. I had almost forgotten the errand we were bound on, when, after an hour's marching, I was suddenly reminded of it by a distant boom, instantly followed by the crash of a large howitzer-shell bursting over our heads. The enemy had caught sight of the head of our column, and opened a rapid fire from several howitzers, previously placed in position to receive us. As rapidly as it could be done, the column was deployed into line, the men running up over the broken ground to their places in line as best they could. There was no time to think now. The enemy's guns were telling on us already, and must be captured. The country was level and well wooded. Being a little in rear of the line, all I could see at first was our own men advancing at an easy run, and a very broken irregular line they were—looking very different from what they would have looked at Aldershot. The enemy's shot and shell in the mean time were ploughing up the ground all about us. The roar of a round-shot as it passes is a most unpleasant sound. There is a fierceness in it which is very suggestive, and one feels at first an almost irrepressible inclination to duck to it. All young soldiers do so. In a rapid advance such as we were making, there is not time for much thought, but it struck me at once that I felt no fear. I was conscious of a fierce excitement urging me on. I was surprised, too, at noticing how little effect such a cannonade had in thinning our ranks. I positively saw no one in the act of falling, and in a very few minutes I had acquired a sort of confidence in my good fortune—a feeling that it could not be so very dangerous after all, and that I should probably come out unharmed.

After advancing some distance, a momentary halt was made as we emerged from the wooded country on an open slope in full view of the enemy, who were posted on the opposite side of a small stream about four hundred yards in our front. They had by this time begun to fire "case" at us, and at each discharge the ground was dotted with little puffs of dust as the shower of iron bullets fell. Though less formidable to the ear, it was far more dangerous than the round-shot, and it was necessary to put a stop to it as speedily as possible; so, after firing an irregular volley, we advanced afresh.

I can remember one maddening rush, one loud cheer, a few musket-shots, and the guns were in our possession, and the enemy in full retreat. As I reached the first gun, the smoke of the last discharge was still slowly curling out of the muzzle. So rapid had been our rush, that the gunners had left two of their guns still loaded.

With our small force, and with no cavalry, it would have been injudicious to follow up the enemy; so, as quickly as possible, our men were collected, and arrangements made for removing the captured guns. There was now time to look about a little. Parties were being sent out to collect the dead and wounded, and I was astonished to see how many had been hit in that half-hour's fighting. We had lost ninety of our small force. A ghastly sight they were when the doolies had been collected together in a mango-grove. There was every possible form of wound. The dead looked calm and peaceful. I noticed that of the wounded those who were most severely injured seemed in the least pain, and generally had flushed faces.

There was no complaining, no groaning. The stories one sees in books about the screams and cries of wounded men in battle are incorrect. I have been in a great number of actions, and have only twice heard a man cry out when hit, and in each case it was merely a blow from a spent bullet—the most painful wound of all, at the time. I noticed some peculiar sights. On one side, a little drummer-boy lamenting over a pony which belonged to him, and which, having been left in the rear, had had its head smashed by a stray shot; on another side, an officer shooting a wounded horse. Near one of the captured guns lay a gunner, the lower part of whose face had been completely cut away by one of our round-shot. I saw one of our gun-bullocks minus a horn, which had been broken off close to his head.

As we marched back to camp, with the bands playing as before, but for the captured guns I could hardly have realised that we had been in action since the morning. The impression left on my mind was more what I have felt after a good day's hunting, though there was, of course, in addition, a feeling of great thankfulness at having come safely out of it. I have been in many a fight since, but I never afterwards felt any gloomy thoughts in anticipation. What I have described as my sensations are, I believe, felt but once in a lifetime.

In writing this I have not attempted to give a correct account of the action in question, but have simply aimed at describing what I actually saw and felt. I must mention one thing that impressed me at the time, and that I have often since observed:—how completely soldiers forget all their scientific musketry instruction, the instant they get under fire. When face to face with the enemy, nineteen men out of twenty never look at the sights of their rifles, but blaze away at random. Pluck and dash then become far more valuable qualities than good shooting.

Two years afterwards, happening to be in the

same part of the country, I revisited the scene. It was a bright still morning when I walked over the ground, and I could with difficulty realise the fact that on that very spot we had been exposed to a murderous fire. The ground itself was changed. The little stream at the foot of the slope had been deepened into a drainage canal. A railway ran obliquely across the way by which we had advanced, and a bungalow belonging to one of the officials had been built on the very spot where the enemy's guns had been posted.

CHESTERFIELD JUNIOR.

A SON'S ADVICE TO HIS FATHER.

MY DEAR FATHER,—I have undertaken to make you acquainted with some of the leading characteristics of the times we live in, and I must not shrink from my undertaking. I think it is desirable that I should now say something to you about what they call the rising generation—the young people of the day, my contemporaries, and still more my juniors. I cannot help thinking, from certain observations which I have made, that you really do stand in special need of a hint or two to assist you in understanding this very important section of modern society.

Yes, dear sir, I say "important" advisedly, and because I think that you are not sufficiently impressed with the enormous difference between the young people of this day and those who flourished when you were young. I dare say at that time the opinions and the feelings of what you are pleased to call "boys," were not much considered. You were snubbed, sir, I suspect, and kept under in your youth, and hoodwinked into a belief that you were but an unfledged ignorant creature, and that every person who had the advantage of you in point of age was necessarily wiser and more worthy of respect. Allow me to suggest, sir, that such sentiments might do very well at the time I am speaking of, but that they will not do now.

As I have it greatly at heart to form your character, so that you shall become in all respects a person capable of mixing with the society of the day, it is necessary that I should be perfectly frank and open with you in all things, and that I should point out undisguisedly all such deficiencies as I may chance to observe in your conduct; especially any want of readiness to conform to the dictates laid down on all subjects whatsoever by the men of this great and glorious period.

I must mention then—and one instance will serve as well as a great many—that I could not help being a good deal struck the other day by your treatment of young Mr. Pettiford when you met him at dinner, at the house of our friend Colonel Stopper. And here, if you will allow me, I would take the opportunity (parenthetically) of offering you a word of advice on your choice of friends. I would ask you—Is the

society of Colonel Stopper, and men of his stamp, altogether good for you? Is not your advance hopeless while you associate with such persons? I have no doubt, because you say so, that Colonel Stopper is possessed of many good and estimable qualities; but I cannot resist the evidence of my own senses, which tell me that he is, beyond all the men whom it has ever been my lot to encounter, opinionated and prejudiced. He objects to railroads; he openly states that his servants have orders to refuse admission at the doors to any telegraphic despatch which may be brought to the house; and he retired from the army when he found out that the old "Brown Bess" was really about to be superseded by the modern rifle. Is this man—a man, too, who, I am obliged to remind you, is in the habit of garnishing his conversation with many strange and most unnecessary expetives, with which the present generation is altogether unacquainted—the kind of person with whom it is good and profitable for the parent, whose welfare I have so much at heart, to associate? Surely not. It is my duty to warn you against him. And not against him only, but against all the other members of that shocking old club, the Retrogressum, to which I cannot conceal my regret that you will still continue to belong. What good can come of such a club? They resist all modern improvements. Its members still play at long whist. They drink port wine, though their old limbs suffer so much in consequence that they are all obliged to sit with their legs propped upon a kind of stool shaped like a T, and so completely an institution of the past that I really do not know what it is called. The club envelopes are not adhesive, as I remarked when going over the establishment in your company, and no periodicals of more recent date than the Quarterly and the Edinburgh are admitted to the library table.

Never in my life have I heard such conversation as I listened to at that club, when you, dear sir, with the kindest and best intentions, gave me a dinner there. A great deal of the talk was entirely unintelligible to me; but I could understand enough of it to perceive that it was all directed against modern institutions and the new generation, and that, upon the whole, everything that tends to make life endurable was stigmatised as a "new-fangled invention brought about by those d—d railroads and those d—d penny newspapers between them." My good sir, the Retrogressum is no place for you, and perhaps you will allow me to send in your resignation.

But I must return to your misapprehension of the new generation and its characteristics, and your treatment of young Pettiford, of the Civil Service. It appeared to me as if both you and Colonel Stopper were disposed to ignore this young man's existence. It seemed as if you had made up your minds that nothing which he could by any possibility say upon any subject could be worth a moment's attention, and that whenever he attempted to speak, that was to be the signal for you or the colonel to cut in and in-

interrupt him. Dear sir, this kind of thing may have been all very well in your time, as you call it, and when you were a young man, but not now; because the relative positions of senior and junior are so very much changed of late years.

Why, to take the case of that very young Pettiford. I assure you, that young fellow deserves a vast amount of consideration. Yet the colonel treated him with absolute rudeness, interrupted him, talked through him in a tone of voice with which it was impossible to compete; elbowed him, in short, out of the conversation. Well, sir, I assure you that young Pettiford has gone through examinations which would have gravelled the colonel in five minutes; he has acquired information on a variety of points concerning which the colonel is grossly ignorant. Besides this, he has passed, and is passing, his young days in a wholesome and useful manner. He has a great deal of sound sense and discretion, and would shrink from many an act of folly that some of his elders would fall into.

Sir, the young men of this day are a peculiar race, and deserve a little study, though you may not think it. The new system of education is beginning to tell. A race of men—though you and the colonel call them “boys”—has grown up under that new system, and an estimate can now to some extent be formed of its results. The reduction of coercion to a minimum, the utmost accordance of liberty that could reasonably be granted, the treatment of boys as rational creatures deserving of consideration and capable of detecting injustice and wrong—all these are new features in an educational plan, entirely modern, and entirely opposed to the views on education which obtained even during the earlier portion of the present century. There is no end to the advantages which have been gained by this great change in one of the most important parts of a nation's economy. The young men of the day are no longer like hounds held in leash, ready to tear off to the world's end when the restraints are removed at last—as, remember, at last, they always must be. “The brisk minor” no longer “pants for twenty-one;” because, when “twenty-one” arrives, he will act very much as he did at eighteen. His youth has not been one of restraint and coercion. Human life is not an unknown but fascinating mystery to him, which hitherto he has been forbidden to look into, but which now he is suddenly at liberty to explore. Oh, sir, it was a great mistake, that old plan of shutting up as long as you could, *what it was not yours to shut up for ever*. You used to keep the flood-gates closed till the very last moment. You kept a mighty and ever-rebelling force pent up within them as long as the thing was possible, and when it was no longer possible, and you were obliged to fling them wide, Heavens! what a bursting forth there was, what a roaring and rushing of waters, and, alas! too often, what devastation and laying waste!

We go all the other way now. Let in the light, is our cry, let in the light. Never accord to evil, the tremendous advantage which it gains

in being surrounded by mystery. In so far as it is possible, and in accordance with common sense, let there be liberty in all things, and knowledge of all things.

Upon the whole, then, it does seem as if the young men of the present day reached years of discretion, and became men, earlier than in the past day, and I think they conceive a little differently of that quality of manliness, and form a different estimate of its component parts from that which used to be formed by their grandfathers. Dissipation and swearing and wild practical jokes, often of a very cruel and inhuman sort, are no longer considered to be important ingredients in forming the manly character. Any persons who might happen in these days to be addicted to such practices would be regarded—not with wonder and awe as “first-rate Corinthians,” but might, on the contrary, run a considerable risk of being treated with contempt and aversion, and set down as “unmilitated blackguards.”

And yet, let no one run away with the impression that such a youngster as I am speaking of—such an one as may be taken as a fair specimen of the best modern type of young man—is in the slightest degree open to the charge of being a “milksoy,” though I can fancy your friend, the colonel, being exceedingly ready to prefer it against him. Very far from that; he is able and willing to do anything that becomes a man. Our present educational system turns out a number of young men, sound in body and rational in mind. As to the rising men who are to set the Thames on fire, that is another matter. You cannot so educate a youth as to make him a genius: any more than you can, by any system yet discovered, arrest the propagation of blockheads.

I have set before you, my worthy parent, a good specimen of the youth of the day; but I should be very sorry to assert that there are no bad specimens, or that even the good are without defects. I can view this subject dispassionately. I belong to this period, but I am not wedded to it. I am one of the new generation, though not of the last batch; I can see the defects of the new generation. Let me initiate you, dear sir, if it is only to show my impartiality.

It seems to me, from what I have heard, and read, and observed, that with every passing year men get to have less of individuality than they used to have, and this characteristic of the day appears to affect the rising generation in an almost inconceivable degree. In the good and the bad that is in them, they are marvellously like each other, and cut out to a pattern. They all dress alike to a button—nay, to the fastening or unfastening of a button; not a plait of their shirt-fronts in the evening, not a fold of their neckerchiefs in the morning, gives the slightest indication of freedom of thought. These young fellows talk alike, moreover, using the same words, thinking the same thoughts, expressing them, *tant bien que mal*, in the same slang. They all have the same tastes. They frequent race-courses in the proper race-costume

of the moment; they are always, when you meet them in the street, "going to look at a gun which Westley Richards is making for them." They speak freely of horses and horse-dealing, and understand such subjects about as well as they do wine and wine-dealing. This is a period, too, my dear father (and I beg you will bear this in mind at quarter-day), when a considerable amount of luxury characterises the appointments of a young gentleman of fashion. He requires many suits of knickerbockers of various colours; he must have cricketing suits and boating suits, and hunting costumes; and, moreover, he needs not only a little bouquet for his button-hole, but a little glass flower-vase to stand upon his toilet-table and keep the said bouquet fresh and bright. Our youths are obliged to bend their minds seriously and often, to tailoring questions; they go to Mr. Poole's shop to try on, and take the great proprietor of the establishment aside, in order to converse with him on such topics as are interesting to them; they stick out their chests boastfully while trying a new waistcoat, and make purchases in the back shop, where the shirt-studs, and waistcoat-buttons, and cigar-cases, are displayed so temptingly. They consume Mr. Poole's sherry-and-water, and talk with each other in an intellectual fashion concerning Goodwood or the Oaks.

This is one class of my contemporaries, dear sir. In some respects it is considered rather a high class. Some of these will be our future legislators, and will govern the country, as their fathers did before them. There are other young men who imitate them to the best of their ability, and in so far as the lamentable fact that they have something to do in the world will permit. These imitators, of the second order of merit, manage to get up a tolerable appearance, have their buttons in the right places, keep clear of offence in the matter of neckcloths, and in some cases even contrive to talk a language which will pass with the uninitiated for the real thing, and which is indubitably characterised by the needful amount of feebleness, and by "a most plentiful lack of wit." These young men are for the most part a grave race. They are little given to mirth and laughter, and there is not much of what is called fun among them. Perhaps they are influenced by the precept and example of our great namesake, to whom I cannot help making reference from time to time, and who says in one of his ever-memorable letters: "I am sure that, since I have had the full use of my reason, nobody has ever heard me laugh."

"I fancy, my dear father, from what I have heard you say, that we of the present generation are a much more prudent and cautious race than you and your contemporaries were; that we are more temperate in our ideas, and have fewer illusions. Ah, sir! what things have I heard you say on the subject of youth, and in what terms have I heard you speak of your own young days! How have I heard you speak of your high standard of life, your lofty aspirations, your anticipations of great things to be achieved by yourself and others! You

had heard nonsense talked about the corruption of human nature; but you saw no corruption, and believed in none. Men were not what crabbed old philosophers supposed them to be. They were great creatures, with a high mission to be gloriously fulfilled. These were the men; while as to the women—they were angels.

But you have told me also, my father, of a time that succeeded to this period of strong belief; of a time when it began to wane and fade; when convictions long put aside, and forced away, came on in strength. You have told me that you were slow in finding things and people out, and that the rosy splendour which shone at first on all things, was not exchanged for ordinary sober daylight until you had reached that period of life which is generally called its meridian: coming in contact with many things on the way which had the effect of sobering your views and lowering your standard to an earthy level. Perhaps this knowledge, gained by you and by others like you, may have profited us of the next generation with such profit as may belong to a second-hand experience. Perhaps we have been let into the world's secrets, earlier and more completely than you were, and have been suffered to go behind the scenes more freely than the former generation. At all events, and be the origin of the result what it may, I believe—and I am influenced in my opinion by studying the works and lives of Byron, Keats, and others who have "flown high"—I believe, that if we do not rise so high as the youth of another period, neither do we fall so low as they in their season of reaction. We do not rush from one extreme to another, nor, after conceiving a very elevated view of humanity, and lauding it in the most exalted terms, do we take suddenly to speaking of it as a thing too low for hope, and calling it by all the bad names we can think of.

That we are a wary set, up to a great deal, inclined to keep a good look-out ahead, and not easily taken in, I admit freely; but where is the harm of that? On the contrary, is it not a very good thing not only for ourselves, but for our parents and guardians? See how we keep out of scrapes; see how we eschew imprudent marriages, and all that sort of thing, that used to be called romance, and the exceedingly practical and unromantic consequences of which, descended upon the parents and guardians just mentioned. Come, sir! Was not that ardent and generous young man who has been supposed to personify youth, and to be the embodiment of all its fine qualities—was he not rather an alarming customer to have to deal with? He was a fine fellow? O no doubt! He was of a trusting character; he was the creature of impulse; he paused not to consider consequences; he was above all paltry considerations of self-interest; he considered that to look before he leapt was to have an old head on young shoulders, and so he leapt without looking. He was the creature of good and generous impulse. What! does his friend want money? He shall have it. This model youth does not stop to consider where it is to come from. It would be beneath him to

pause and reflect that in the end it must come from his poor old father, with the limited means and the large family. Or perhaps it is the altar of love instead of friendship on which he is to sacrifice. The inevitable Nancy, daughter of the inevitable farmer in bad circumstances, appears upon the scene. The model young man is in love with her. She has nothing. He has nothing. What does he care? Shall love give way before mercenary considerations? Is a girl the worse because she has no money? Is the daughter of the English yeoman to be despised because her father is not descended from the Conqueror, or because she has not been brought up at St. James's? Never shall it be said that Harry Greatheart is the man to consider pounds, shillings, and pence when the happiness of Nancy is at stake. Perish the thought! But, when the young people are at the end of their tether—what then? Why then, sir, they fall back upon the poor old gentleman, the much misused and much abused Old Square-toes, who pays for all.

And yet I have heard some of your contemporaries, my dear father, when griding against us men of the new generation, complain that we have no hearts, and try to prove it by asserting that we never get into these difficulties. It was only the other day that the colonel himself said in so many words, "Damme"—it is the colonel's habit to garnish his talk with such expressions—"damme," says he, "when I was a boy, a fellow thought nothing of ruining himself for a girl; but *now* they're as cold as ice, the young milksops, and have no more heart among the lot of 'em than a Normandy pippin." Think, sir, which has the most heart. He who refrains from sacrificing his family, his future, and very probably the ultimate welfare and happiness of a young girl, to a selfish fancy, or he who gratifies that fancy, and in so doing brings misery into his old home, destroys the career which was before him, and subjects the object of his short-lived attachment to a long series of slights and annoyances for which she has at last nothing to recompense her—no, not even the affection about which her selfish lover used to prate, in the first transports of his youthful passion?

I must leave off for the present, my excellent parent; but I have by no means said all that I have to say about the characteristics of that new generation to which I have the honour of belonging.

P. CHESTERFIELD, JUNIOR.

CHILDREN'S DINNER-PARTIES.

In a quiet little paved street at the back of St. Pancras church, looking more like a close in a staid cathedral town than one of the noisy dirty ant-hills of London, the words "Sick Children's Dinner-table," printed across the white blind of a decent-looking window, informs the public and the poor, that here, No. 2, Woburn-buildings, where invalid adults have their daily rations, sick and puny children may also be fed.

It is now just five minutes to twelve, the dinner-hour of the little people. We push open the door and enter. The place is full. Some are little children, and some are in the prime of life, some are tottering and aged; but all look as if a good dinner of meat and potatoes was a thing of rare occurrence and great need, and, sick though they may be, as if the food they are to have to-day will be of more good to them than any amount of drugs and doctor's stuff. These are the diners at the establishment; while ranged against the wall are groups of girls and women with jugs and basins in their hands, waiting to carry home the dinners of such as are too ill to attend personally. These are the holders of green tickets; to the fortunate possessors of the red are allowed extra medical comforts in the shape of wine, brandy, beef-tea, or whatever may be thought best for the case in question. The diners at the establishment hold white tickets as their cards of admission.

We are received by a dark-eyed, smiling matron, who, once matron of a reformatory, has that happy mixture of kindness and decision which is just what is wanted for free-going societies among the poor—a manner that influences while it attracts, at once genial and with authority. And as the success or failure of a thing of this kind depends very much upon the cheerful temper and power of organisation of the conductors and managers, the kindly smile and prompt decision of the matron here are things of greater moment than the mere outside pleasantness involved. The room into which we enter, and where the adults dine half an hour after the little ones, is clean, simply furnished, and cheerful; as devoid of parade as of poverty. A festoon of coloured paper here and there, a heartening "Welcome" emblazoned overhead, popular prints framed in painted cardboard on the wall itself, and a few cheap ornaments on the chimney-piece, give a bright and animated look most valuable to the sickly and depressed. The tablecloth is clean; the roast meat smells savoury and appetising; by the narrow table, which in reality is no table at all, but the back of the form made so that if turned one way it is a horizontal table, and if turned the other, a perpendicular back, sit the invalids patiently waiting their turn; a cozy place next the fire is kept for the more aged; and if the children are in excess of the accommodation afforded by their own up-stairs room, the surplus remain below, here in the room of the adults. The dinner is the same in all cases—a good quantity of excellent roast meat, two or three potatoes, a large slice of bread, for the adults, half a pint of strong porter, or, if that is not taken, an extra share of bread; for the children water, but, in exchange, an orange or a little bit of cake, &c., by way of dessert. There is no stint. They may be helped as often as they like—the more hungry ones coming three times; and for this they pay, the adults twopence, and the children one penny each. This simply pays the rent, the matron, and the servant; the food is provided

by the sale of the tickets and donations, and every farthing subscribed and given is spent in food.

But the proper room of the little people is upstairs, whither the matron kindly leads us. Here are two long tables, and a small side-table where the carving goes on; they are all covered by clean white cloths, the knives, and forks, and mugs, and salt-cellars are also clean; down the centre of the principal table stand a few vases with gay-coloured flowers, which give that air of brightness and a perpetual fête that helps almost as much as food; a musical box in the middle of the table tinkles out the Perfect Cure; and by the window is a pretty vivarium, made cheaply and yet effectively with little jets of tiny fountains. The walls are clothed with pictures framed in the same manner as those below stairs; there is a small Christmas tree, with a few toys and baubles to delight the wandering wondering eyes; and the whole thing is an evidence of what care and taste may do with the poorest materials and at the most trifling cost. It is all pretty and gay, but a prettiness and a gaiety quite appropriate to and attainable by the poor; in which lies its special service at Woburn-buildings—in the heart of one of the poorest districts of London.

How poor, but few even in the district itself fully realise and understand! In a small court close at hand, occupying about as much space as a gentleman's mansion, it is calculated that there are over five hundred children alone; and this is under the estimate which one visitor made. We need scarcely ask what manner of life these hapless little creatures lead, pent-up in this stifling atmosphere—what poverty, what misery, what squalid wretchedness of circumstance, and what abject want make such a contrast as that afforded by this bright and cheerful room and pleasant nourishment of infinitely more worth than many other things of wider scope and larger pretensions.

Grace being said by the lady presiding (the wife of the kindly founder and upholder of this charity), the little hands folded together in that sweet attitude of childish reverence, however ignorant, the serious business of the hour sets in. While she is carving for the children, the younger ones needing to have their meat "cut up," we will take a look round the table to watch the faces of the small guests, and speculate on character and future fate, as one is always tempted to do with children.

For the most part pale, stunted, ill developed, their looks alone show how much the charity is needed, and how sadly poverty has already stunted the fair proportions of life. The healthiest are a family of three, to whom the lady subscribing has given tickets continuously for a year; so that they have quite a robust and well-to-do look, so far as bone and muscle are concerned, though it is a pity to be obliged to add that they are the dirtiest in person and the most poorly clad of the assembly. These little creatures have two good dinners of meat, bread, and potatoes twice a week (Monday and Thurs-

day), which is almost as much as some people of means would think sufficient for such small folks, a new belief creeping in among sundry—a reaction as much as a belief—that we may do too much in the way of feeding up, and that "butcher's meat" can be used in excess. At all events, two thoroughly good meals in the week are a great advance on the normal condition of a poor child's dietary table, and are immense helps in other ways besides the way of food. All the good and beauty that these poor children see and learn, they see and learn at this bi-weekly festival of theirs; and all the care and cleanliness they get is what is compulsory here—clean hands and faces being absolutes, entailing the loss of the dessert if not up to the right mark. They are, at all events, partially cleansed twice a week; they hear the clear tinkle of the musical box—that thing of wonder, that voice of an imprisoned spirit, to a child's mind; they see the pictures, and the flowers, and the clean tablecloth, and the festoons of coloured paper; they hear a few words of kindness from the gentle voice of the lady; they hear a few words of simple grace; and who shall say that even so slight and so few means may not be of incalculable benefit in the times to come? who shall say what lovely memories of the warmth and welcome and orderliness there may not help in that ambition and desire to succeed and do well, without which all human beings sink down in the moral scale, no matter what the original starting-point?—who knows? All germs are small, and the growth and power of the tree cannot be fairly measured by the weight and size of the seed.

Those who know the poor by personal acquaintance, are well aware that dirt is no necessary part of poverty. It belongs to ignorance and helplessness and that terrible state in which people have nothing to lose from public opinion, but it is not integrally necessary to poverty. That truth has a striking confirmation here. The two cleanest children are the two of poorest fortunes, yet they are as neat and well cared for as if the mother had a nursery on the second floor, and a nurse whose sole business it was to attend to the young ladies. Their history is sad enough. The father died immediately on the birth of the baby—he was found dead in his bed one morning; then the new-born baby had whooping-cough, and died. The younger of the two now at table had also whooping-cough, and was reduced to a skeleton by the disease. "It made me almost cry," said the lady, "when the poor little creature was brought in, wrapped in a dressing-gown like a baby, so weak that she could not stand; but we fed her up, and she is now nearly as strong as she was before."

Since then the mother's health has given way, and she is now dying. She has three shillings a week to live on, and her two children receive tickets for the sick children's dinner-table. But they look almost too good for anything in the shape of alms; clean, tidy, their clothes well kept, their hair smooth, glossy, and perfectly clean, they

are evidences of the beautifying effects of care, and how, on even three shillings a week, a woman can, if so minded, keep her children wholesome—and something more. It will be a painful thing if the poor little ones are forced to go into the workhouse on the mother's death; which seems to be only too certain. Though the legal and recognised asylum for the helpless poor, the shadow of that grim House is, somehow, unfavourable to those living under it; and the very name of "Workhouse apprentice" tells against the future of a girl. But perhaps, if the dark hour comes, some one will be found to befriend them, and procure them admission into an orphan asylum, such as the Wanstead Asylum, say, where they may be taught the best duties of women, and how to earn an honourable independence when the time of work comes.

All sorts of faces and characters sit round that long narrow table; the squalid and the cared for, as we have seen, though none are as beautifully neat as our two young friends here—the beautiful and the plain, the timid, not daring to look up, and answering in a whisper when spoken to, and the bold, innocent of the first dawns of class-reverence, the nervous and the stolid, the keen look of conscious hunger—God help them!—and the deadened look of creatures who, by the brutalisation of poverty, have never attained the full use of their faculties. Some come half famished, and are scarcely to be satisfied; but, after a short course of sufficing "dinings-out," the wolfish hunger is appeased, and the appetite becomes more natural and healthy. Others cannot eat much at the first. The digestive powers, like the body, are half starved for want of use, and it is only by degrees and carefully that the stomach can be made able to receive the ordinary amount of food. This is a sadder thing to see than the wolfish hunger; telling, as it does, of depressed vital functions and organs absolutely undeveloped through privation.

Then the dresses are as much matters of study as the faces, and almost as eloquent. There are some with the well-known dash of finery among their rags—battered hats with faded ribbons, crumpled flowers, and feathers that seem to have been lately swept through the gutter—crinolines made of barrel-hoops distending ragged frocks fit only for the paper-mill—beads and wretched tags of torn lace—the dirt and finery of so many small savages. Some are almost like little gentlefolks, with their short frocks and white stockings, faultless collars and spruce knickerbockers. One little open-faced curly-headed rascal was quite lovely enough to be the model of one of E. V. B.'s exquisite Germanised children; another sturdy hero—a future Nelson perhaps—had a smart shining sailor's cap and a short round jacket, which made him not unlike a Dutch skipper in miniature; another quaint mannikin wore a queer little black skull-cap, with a laughable likeness to a small Dousterswivel or a learned professor of abstruse science partial to close head-gear.

Some were rough and unpolished, eating with their fingers and left hands when not watched; and some had the peculiar air and manner of Sunday-school children—the curtsy, the apt reply, the better look, the *manner of society* in fact, as evident with them as with their little sisters of a higher grade, when trimmed and polished by careful teaching and good practice. Older girls chaperoned quite little baby ones, and took care of them with that sweet assumption of motherliness which is one of the prettiest sights among young children. Shy strangers sat in childish awkwardness, unaccustomed to place, and ways, and circumstances, but taking to the initiation kindly enough.

Thus, when dinner was done—and, as has been said, all had as much as they would—grace was said, and the little folks, filing out in order, turned up their young faces to the lady and said "Good morning" to her kindly adieu, the boys describing with their hands that wonderful arc which does duty for a bow, and the girls dropping curtsies. There were fifty-seven children on that day of our visit, and fifty invalid adult tickets came in. It was on a Thursday, and Thursday is always the more thronged of the two days for the children's dinners; Sunday's better food remaining as a reminiscence that should stay Monday's appetites, think the parents, perhaps; and the district visitors and others who have tickets to give away not getting fairly into the swing of their work in time for the hour of announcement. For all tickets must be sent in before nine o'clock in the morning, that it may be known how much meat it is necessary to cook for the day, everything being done and arranged by the busy matron and her one servant between nine and twelve o'clock. The best plan is to ante-date the tickets for several days' food, and then the matron has her work before her, and knows what she is about, and what she has to provide for.

This, then, was the pictorial aspect of the charity, as we may say; the working part, the backbone of principle and moral object, is of a graver character.

The co-operation of the poor in their own advancement and well-being, and not only almsgiving even where almsgiving is so much needed, is the corner-stone of this dinner-table scheme—a scheme not merely eleemosynary and by no means tending to pauperisation, but being simply great help on the terms of a little done by the poor themselves to meet the efforts of others. But this little, trifling as it is compared to the amount given (twopence from each adult—the cost of dinner averaging eightpence—and a penny from each child—the cost of dinner averaging fourpence-halfpenny), yet lifts the charity to the rank of a self-helping institution in the minds of the poor, and prevents that lazy dependence on others which is just the curse clinging to benevolence. These twopences and pennies pay for the house and attendance; the dinners are met by the sale of the tickets and by donations. The full amount of the subscriptions is spent on food, and if a larger number of people

attended, the average expenses would be lessened, as the working cost for dining fifty is the same as it would be for dining eighty. But the poor want incessant hunting up; and though a benefit like this may be before their very eyes, yet they will, for the most part, lazily pass it by unless continually spurred up by those of the educated classes who are interested in them, and earnest and unwearied in serving them: as is Mr. Hicks, the founder and upholder of this special charity. Had it not been for his personal superintendence and that of his wife, the scheme would have lapsed long ago; but they are people not to be wearied in well-doing, and they understand the poor.

Indeed no good can be done among them save by personal superintendence. Public opinion rules us all more or less; and those who know the poor, know that the want of a high-class standard of public opinion among them is one of the greatest obstacles existing to their improvement. And nothing gives this so much as personal contact with the more highly educated.

The object and means of this charity are given in a very succinct and comprehensive summary, which we quote.

The Objects of this Charity are:

1. To help the Working Men and Working Women of St. Pancras to help themselves.
2. To do this only when they are unable to work, through recent sickness.
3. To give that which will enable them to regain their strength and return to their occupations.

The means adopted are:

1. To give them a good Dinner, daily, for a week or two, of the best food procurable.
2. To relieve none but cases recommended by Subscribers or a Society.
3. To distribute the Dinner Tickets to Hospitals, Dispensaries, &c., and those who can recommend cases from personal knowledge.

Indeed, the greatest good is done by giving tickets to charitable societies and to hospitals. Mr. Hicks himself gives tickets to the Hospital for Sick Children, which are not always made use of, and would keep six places for them at each bi-weekly dinner if only so many consumers would be sent. The little creatures often break down for want of sufficient nourishment after they have been discharged from the hospital—as do their elders—and it is then when the charity is so especially valuable.

One or two dinner-tables (adult) of the same character are to be met with, however, scattered about London,* which is what is wanted; the extension of the principle, not the enlargement of this one particular concern, being what Mr. Hicks has at heart, and what all who care

for the poor would rejoice to see. The idea of the sick child's dinner-table is not quite original to the present founder, inasmuch as Victor Hugo has for years done the same kind of thing at his own home in Jersey, where he has fed the sick and hungry little ones with the great-hearted generosity one would have expected from the author of *Les Misérables*.

It is good that a charity of this nature should be in the hands of the laity rather than of the clergy. Often bad men of business, and naturally inclined to consider undeniable orthodoxy as equal in value to the claims of hunger, they do not always make good patrons and guardians of charities. Wherefore when laymen like Mr. Hicks come forward to devote themselves heart and soul and life to the cause of the poor, what they undertake is almost sure to succeed. Sectarian prejudices are kept out of sight; poverty, not orthodoxy, constitutes the claim to help, and the hands of the Church are strengthened by the very denial of the management of secularities. Yet the influence of religious teaching, even in this one of the most material of all charities, cannot be too largely desired; and, as Mr. Hicks says, if some helping missionary would volunteer to come and read to the adults when dining, the roast meat would be none the less savoury, nor the porter less strengthening. Some missionary, that is, who would help in the charity itself by sifting cases and finding out deserving objects, and so doing good work both inside the house and out.

No, let such charities be kept out of the hands of the church and the parish authorities alike. Supported by voluntary contributions, managed by voluntary guardians, true labours of love in the highest sense, that very element of pure love, that very essential power of the free gift, gives a wholesomeness and vitality which no formal arrangements could give. So wide spreading is the interest taken in such things when known, that Mr. Hicks received one subscription from Madras, in consequence of a notice of his charity falling into the hands of an utter stranger to him and to St. Pancras.

Thirteen thousand invalids, poor men and women, have been dined in that pleasant room in Woburn-buildings during the last three years, and two thousand seven hundred poor sick children—making in all fifteen thousand seven hundred hungry mouths well filled. "Need any more be said to prove its usefulness?" says the little address to the subscribers, printed on the cover of the book of tickets. "Suffering from all kinds of diseases (from half starvation not the least of them), cases are sent from hospitals, dispensaries, and charitable institutions all round this district." It is established to supply the sick and convalescent poor who have just left our hospitals and dispensaries with what they require to fit them for their work again: namely, a good dinner daily for a week or two. To those for whom it was originally intended might be added the aged and infirm, and others who are past work. All cases must be recommended by a subscriber or

* Four, we believe, in all. One in Earl-street, Lisson-grove, Edgeware-road (1859); another in Upper Ebury-street, Pimlico (1861); a third in Poplar-place, Moscow-road, Bayswater (1861); and this fourth in Woburn-buildings, founded by Mr. Hicks in the October of 1862. And there is a sick child's dinner-table in or near Clare-market.

some society. Every person is required to pay twopence, the remainder of the cost of the dinner being defrayed out of subscriptions and donations. Particular attention is requested to the following advantages peculiar to this charity:

1. That the full amount of the Subscriptions is spent in Food, without any deduction whatever for Rent or Management.

2. Every person relieved is known to be deserving, by the personal visitation of those who make it their kind office to visit the poor at their own homes.

3. The Donations are likewise spent in Food, with this difference, that they are used to supply Book of Dinner Tickets to Hospitals, Dispensaries, and Charitable Institutions, which have no fund applicable for such purposes.

4. That as soon as a larger attendance is secured, all the working expenses, including Rent and Management, will be defrayed by the poor themselves, thus carrying out the original intention of this Charity, "to help the poor to help themselves."

It will, however, be obvious from the above that large numbers can alone enable this to be done; and as the expenses are very nearly the same to dine fifty persons daily as to dine the present number (about thirty), it is to be hoped the former number will soon be reached.

The book of tickets is one guinea for forty dinners (adult), the odd shilling representing the expenses of printing, &c., while the whole of the remaining twenty shillings goes in food. A book of ten dinner-tickets for children is three and sixpence.

The Sick Children's Dinner, though well worth visiting, is better worth upholding and copying in districts where needed. In both sections of the charity—for we have spoken of both almost as one, the daily dinner-table of the adults, and the bi-weekly dinner-table of the children—it is eminently practical, humane, and useful. There is no pauperising quality about it, no doubtful nor mischievous element whatever. That puny children should be made, if possible, into hale and wholesome men and women, and that the hungry should be fed when they are unable to feed themselves, are canons of a law as eternal as humanity itself. Mr. Hicks does no more than this; but he does this, and thoroughly; his success lying as much in the spirit as in the means, and more in his manner of action than in his material. It is by love, by personal care, by personal visiting, by personal knowledge, by unwearied exertions, by thorough-going devotion to the thing he has undertaken, that he has made his charity so entirely satisfactory; and we must add, also, by recognising a higher motive than even that of charity, great as this is, and by working among and for the poor in the spirit of Him who said, "He who giveth unto the least of these, giveth unto me," and one of whose last commandments to his Apostle was, "Feed my lambs." Zeal, common sense, and a noble aim, will make most things succeed. What a great thing it would be if many of our readers thought the same, and

went to Woburn-buildings for lessons how to employ their leisure, and on what to expend their energies!

BET'S MATCH-MAKING.

THE only time I ever tried match-making in my life was when I was seventeen, and I then so burnt my fingers over the business that I took care never to meddle with it again. I was living at the time with my stepmother on her farm near Ballymena. My father was dead, and my stepmother did not like me. She had placed me for a time with a milliner in the town, but finding it expensive supporting me apart from her, had taken me away again. She was thinking of a second marriage, though I did not know it at the time. But this I did know:—that she had written to some distant friends of my father in America, who had unwillingly consented to take me off her hands.

I don't think it would have been half as hard for me to have made up my mind to die; for I was a shy little thing, without a bit of courage to deal with strangers, and my heart was fit to burst at the thought of leaving the very few friends whom I had to love, and my own little corner of the world, where the trees and the roads knew me. But I felt it would have to be done, and I lay awake all night after the letter arrived, trying to think how I should ever be brave enough to say good-bye to my dear friend Gracie Byrne, and to Gracie's lover, Donnell M'Donnell.

Gracie was the cleverest of all Miss Doran's apprentices. She was an orphan without a friend to look after her, and she was the loveliest girl in the country. People said she was proud and vain; but I never could think she was either. She and I loved one another dearly, though I cannot think what attracted her to poor little plain me. She had plenty of admirers, and she queened it finely amongst them; but the only one to whom I would have given her with all my heart was Donnell M'Donnell. And, oh dear! he was the very one whom she would not look at.

Donnell and I were great friends, and I had promised to do all I could to help him with Gracie. He was young and strong, and as bonny a man as could be seen. He had a fine farm, all his own, some three miles across country from my stepmother's place. If Gracie would but marry him, she should live like a lady, and drive into Ballymena on her own jaunting-car. But she was always saying that she would go away to London, and be a great "West-end" milliner. This terrified me badly, seeing that London is such a wicked place.

My stepmother was always crying out that Gracie would come to a sorrowful end, which made me wild; and as I lay awake that wretched night I thought a great deal about what might happen to her if she went away to London by herself, and she so handsome, and not having a friend at all. And I wished with all my strength

that she would marry Donnell M'Donnell before I went away to America, which would ease my mind about her, and also about him. For I felt the greatest pity in the world for kind big Donnell's disappointment.

My stepmother was provoked at my sad face next day, and called me ungrateful. But when I cried bitterly she got a little kinder, and in the evening allowed me to go into Ballymena to see my friend Gracie. So towards sundown, when the snow was getting red upon the fences, I wrapped my shawl about me and set off for the town; sobbing loudly to ease my heart, all along the lonely road, where there was no one to hear me but the robins. The brown trees against the dusky red sky, the white swelling lines of the fields, the dark chimneys of the town on before me, were all blent in a dismal maze, when who should leap over a stile and stand beside me but Gracie's great lover, Donnell. I told him my eyes were only watering with the cold, and he turned and walked alongside of me for a good way, while we talked of Gracie of course. He was very angry at her, and said she was playing fast and loose with him, and making him the sport of the town and country. I took Gracie's part, and so we went on till we came to the last white gate on the road, and began to meet the townspeople. Then I told him I was going away, and he looked so vexed that I nearly cried again. I felt so glad to see him sorry.

"Well, little Bet," said he, "we must give you a good dance over in yon big farm-house of ours before you go. And, in the mean time——"

"I'll see to your business, Donnell," said I, smiling. "Never fear but I'll do your business to the last."

Then he shook my two hands till he nearly squeezed them into jelly, and left me.

When I went into Miss Doran's it was past the work hour, and the girls were putting on their bonnets to go away; Gracie only was sitting close to the candle, putting the flowers on a ball-dress for one of the county ladies. She having the nicest taste, had always the honour of giving the finishing touches to the most particular work. She looked very tired, but oh, so handsome, with her pale cheek against the yellow light, and her dark head bending over a mass of white and rose-colour tulle.

"A bud here," said she, "and a spray there, and then I have done. You'll come home with me and sleep. That cross stepmother of yours won't see you again to-night."

"Don't talk that way, Gracie," said I; "but I came intending to stay." And the work being finished, we went home to her lodgings.

A lovely bunch of flowers was lying on her table, and she laughed and blushed, and looked beautiful when she saw it.

"Who is that from, Gracie?" said I. "Donnell?"

"No, indeed," said she, tossing her head. But I was sure that was a fib, for she looked as happy as possible, lying resting herself in her arm-chair beside the fire, while I set out the

tea-things. She looking so glad, and the shabby room looking so snug, and our little tea-drinking being so cozy, I could not bear to tell her the bad news now, and began to set about Donnell's business.

"Gracie," said I, "I wish you would marry Donnell soon."

"Soon?" said she, opening her eyes, and looking at me angrily. "I'll never marry him!"

"But you know, Gracie," said I, getting hot about it, "that you ought to marry him. He says—that is, I know—you have made him the laughing-stock of the country, and——"

"Very fine!" cried she. "And so he has been complaining to you, has he?"

"I did not say that," said I; "but, oh, Gracie, I know you like some one. I saw you smiling over a letter the other day, just the way you are smiling now."

"And what if I do?" said she, laughing and tossing her head; "that does not prove that it must be Donnell."

"There is no one else so good," said I, eagerly.

"It could not be any one else."

"Pon my word," said she, staring at me, "I think you had better go and marry him yourself."

"I? Oh, Gracie!" said I, starting up and sitting down again, and beginning to cry, "I wanted to tell you that I am going to America."

You may be sure we talked no more about Donnell that night.

Donnell did not fail to keep his word about giving me a feast before I left the country. He invited three pipers to play, and half the countryside to dance. Gracie and I met at the cross-roads, and walked over to the farm together, she bringing a troop of beaux with her from the town. The farm is a dear old place, with orchard-trees growing up round the house, and it looked so homely that frosty night. Donnell's mother met us at the door, and unpinned our shawls in her own room. Gracie looked beautiful in a pretty new dress and bright ribbon. Donnell's mother stroked my hair with her hand, and stuck a bit of holly in the front of my black frock. She kept me with her, after Gracie had gone down-stairs, holding my hand, and asking me about my going to America. And the place felt so safe and warm, and she was so kind and motherly, after what I was accustomed to at home, that my heart got so sore I could scarcely bear it.

We had a great tea-drinking in the parlour, and then we went out to the kitchen, and the pipers fell to work, and Gracie was as amiable as possible to Donnell. But just in the middle of our dancing the latch of the back door was lifted, and Squire Hannan walked in in his top-boots.

"I wanted to speak to you on business, M'Donnell," he said, "but I will not disturb you now."

"Will you do us the honour of joining us, sir?" said Donnell. Squire Hannan needed no second invitation. He was soon making his bow before Gracie, and Donnell saw no more of

her smiles that night. She danced with the squire till it was time to go home, and then, after she had set out for the town, escorted by him and her other beaux, Donnell's mother kissed me, and Donnell drew my arm through his, and walked home with me across the snowy fields to my stepmother's house. He was abusing Gracie all the way, and I was, as usual, taking her part.

He came to see me one day soon after, and brought me a basket of lovely winter pears. He leaned against the wall and watched me making the butter. He was disgusted with Gracie, he said; she was a flirt, and he did not care a pin about her, only he would not be made a fool of. She had refused to let him walk with her across the hills next Sunday, to the consecration of the new church, and if he did not get some token that she had changed her mind between that and this, he would never, he swore, look her way again, but go and marry some one else for spite.

"Oh no, Donnell," said I, "promise me you won't do that!" For I was sure that Gracie liked him all the while.

"But I will," said he, smiling; "at least, if other people will have me."

"Oh, don't, don't!" said I; but he would not promise.

"It's my mind," said my stepmother, after he had gone, "that you lad's more like a lover of yours than hers. Why don't you catch him, and then you needn't go to America."

"Mother!" I cried, and felt the room spinning round with me, till I caught and held on by the door.

"Well, well," she said, "you needn't look so mad. Many a girl 'd be glad of him."

I thought a great deal about how he had sworn that he would marry some one else if he did not hear from Gracie before Sunday. "I'm sure she likes him," I thought; "she cannot help it. She must have seen how mean even Squire Hannan looked beside him the other night. And it would be a most dreadful thing if he was married to some one he did not care about, and if she went off to London, with a broken heart, to be a 'West-end' milliner." I thought about it, and thought about it. There was no use going to Gracie, for she would only laugh and mock at me. All at once a bright idea came in my head.

I was afraid to think of what I was going to do; but that night, when my stepmother had gone to bed, leaving me to finish spinning some wool, I got out a sheet of paper and a little note of Gracie's which I had in my work-box, and began to imitate Gracie's handwriting. I had not much trouble, for we wrote nearly alike; and afterwards I composed a little letter.

"Dear Mr. M'Donnell," it said, "I have changed my mind, and will be very glad if you will join me on the road to the consecration on Sunday.

"Yours sincerely,

"GRACE BYRNE."

"What harm can it do to send it?" thought

I, trembling all the while. I folded it up, and put it in an envelope directed to Mr. Donnell M'Donnell, The Buckey Farm. "And it may do such a great deal of good! In the first place, it will prevent his marrying for spite before Sunday, and then she will be so glad to see him coming, in spite of her crossness, that she will be quite kind to him. He is always so stiff and proud when she treats him badly, that I am sure it makes her worse. She will never find out that he got any letter—not, at least, till they are quite good friends—married, perhaps—and then they will both thank me."

So the next evening, about dusk, I slipped quietly into the town and posted my letter. I was dreadfully afraid of meeting Donnell or Gracie; but I saw no one I knew. I dropped the note in the letter-box and rushed off towards home again at full speed. I ran nearly all the way; the snowy roads were slippery in the evening frost, and near our house I fell and hurt my foot. A neighbour found me leaning against the stile and brought me home. I was to have sailed for America the very next week, but now I was laid up with a sprained ankle, and my departure was put off.

On Sunday evening, a neighbour woman who had been at the consecration came in to tell us the news: This one had been there of course, and that one had been there for a wonder. Gracie Byrne had been there in a fine new bonnet (the girl was going to the mischief with dress), and Squire Hannan had been there, and given her the flower out of his button-hole.

"And Donnell M'Donnell was with her, of course?" said I.

"Ay, 'deed you may swear it," said the woman. "That'll be a match before long. He walked home with her to the town, and her smilin' at him like the first of June!"

"They'll be married before I go away," said I to myself; and I leaned back into my corner, for the pain of my foot sickened me.

Donnell's mother brought me a custard and some apples the next day.

"Donnell's gone to the Glens, my dear," said she, "or he would ha' been over this mornin' to see you. He went before we heard of your foot, and he won't be home for a week."

"What's he doin' there?" asked my stepmother.

"He has land there, you know," said Donnell's mother, "and he goes whiles to settle his affairs with them that has charge of it. I don't know rightly what he's gone about now. Something has went again him lately, for he's not like himself those few days back. He said somethin' about goin' to be married when he came home, but if he is, it's not after his heart; for I never saw a bridegroom so glum on the head of it. Bet, dear, I thought it was you he liked."

"So he does, Mrs. M'Donnell," said I, "but not that way—not for his wife."

"Well, well, my dear!" said Donnell's mother, wiping her eyes.

Everybody was coming to see me now, on ac-

count of my foot. Gracie came the next day or so, and surely I was amazed at the glory of her dress! My stepmother, who did not like her, left us alone together, and Gracie's news came out. She was going to be married on next Tuesday.

"I know that," said I.

"How do you know it?" said she.

"Donnell's mother told me."

"Donnell's mother! Nothing but Donnell and Donnell's mother from you for ever! How should she know?"

"Oh, Gracie, his own——"

"Why," she burst in, "you don't imagine that he's the man? Why, it's Squire Hannan! Only think, Bet, of your Gracie being the Squire's lady!"

I was quite confounded. "Oh, oh, Gracie!" I stammered.

"Well," said she, sulking, "are you not glad?"

"Oh yes," I said, "very, on your account; but what will become of Donnell?"

"Donnell again. Now listen to me, Bet. I know when a man likes me, and when he doesn't like me, just as well as any other girl; and I've seen this many a day, that Donnell didn't care a pin about me. Not he. He only wanted me to marry him that the people might not say I jilted him. I told him that the other day, when he asked me to have him. 'No matter what I want you for,' said he; 'I want you.' 'Thank you,' said I. And then what had he the impudence to say! If I changed my mind before Sunday I was to send him word, that he might come to the consecration with me. Then he would set off for the Glens on Monday, and settle some business there, and be home for our wedding in a week!"

I screamed out, seeing what I had done.

"The poor foot!" cried Gracie, thinking I was in pain. "Is it bad?"

"Never mind it!" said I. "And what did you say?"

"I said," Gracie went on, "that whatever morning he got up and saw black snow on the ground, that day he might look for a message from me. And yet he had the meanness to walk with me on Sunday, after all. And the best fun of it, is, that they say he's gone to the Glens."

"Oh, oh!" said I, beginning to groan again, and pretending it was all my foot. After that, Gracie talked about herself and Squire Hannan until she went away. And somehow I never had felt as little sorry to part with her before. She seemed not to be my *own* Gracie any longer.

And now I was nearly out of my senses, thinking what mischief might come of my meddling. I was sure that Donnell and Squire Hannan would fight and kill one another, and all through me. I thought I would give all I had in the world to see Donnell before any one else had told him the news, and confess to him what I had done. On Tuesday, about mid-day, a countryman from the Glens came in to light

his pipe, and he said he had passed M'Donnell, of Buckey Farm, on the way.

"An' I think things must be goin' badly with him," said he, "for he has a look on his face as black as the potato blight."

"Somebody has told him, maybe!" said I to myself. And I put on my shawl, and, borrowing a stick from an old neighbour, I hobbled off secretly up the road towards the Glens. I soon got tired and dreadfully cold, as I could not walk fast, and I sat down on a bit of an old grey bridge to watch for Donnell coming past. At last he came thundering along, and although it was getting dusk I could see that he had his head down, and looked dreadfully dark and unhappy.

"Donnell!" said I, calling out to him.

"Who's that?" he said. "Why, it's never little Bet!"

"But indeed it is," said I. "Oh, Donnell, did you hear? I came to tell you. Gracie was married this morning to Squire Hannan."

"Whew!" he gave a long whistle. "The jilt!" said he, and he snapped his fingers. But his whole face brightened up.

"She's not so much a jilt as you think, Donnell," said I, "for—oh, how can I ever tell you!—it was I who wrote you the note you got last week, and she had nothing to do with it. I did it for the best, I did indeed, for I thought that Gracie liked you; I did indeed! And oh, Donnell, sure you won't go and kill Squire Hannan?"

"Won't I," said he, looking awfully savage.

"I cut a great blackthorn this morning in the Glens for no other purpose but to beat out his brains."

I gave a great scream, and, dropping my stick, fell along with it; but Donnell picked me up, and set me safe on his horse behind him.

"Now," said he, "I'll tell you what it is little Bet. I'll make a bargain. You'll marry me, and I won't touch Squire Hannan."

"I marry you?" cried I, "after—after Gracie. Indeed I will not, Donnell M'Donnell."

"I've behaved badly," said he, "but I'm very sorry. It's long since I liked you better than Gracie, but the devil of pride was in me, and the people were saying she would jilt me. When I got your bit of a note, I felt as if I was goin' to be hung. God bless Squire Hannan! Now will you marry me, little Bet?"

"No," said I. And with that he whipped up his horse, and dashed off with me at the speed of a hant.

"Stop, stop!" cried I. "Where are you taking me to? You've passed the turn of our road."

But I might as well shout to the wind. On we dashed, up hill and down hill, through fields and through bogs, with the hedges running along by our side, and the moon whizzing past us among the bare branches of the trees. He never drew rein till the horse stopped at the dear Buckey Farm house door, when he carried me straight into the bright warm kitchen where his mother had the tea set out, and the cakes smoking ready for his return.

"Talk her into reason," said he, putting me into his mother's arms. "I want her to marry me, and she says she won't."

I did my best to keep sulky for a proper length of time, but it was the hardest thing I ever tried to do, and they both so kind, and the place so bright and cozy, and I being so happy on the sly all the time! So the end of it was that I did not go to America, and that I am Mrs. M'Donnell of the Buckey Farm. But I never tried match-making again.

A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOUR.*

CHAPTER I.

SINCE the cruel hour when our prospects in Arcadia (sweetly poetic was the term you entitled to the Emporium) was expatriated by the aid of yonder serpent in whose guile the hypocrisy of the crocodile is included, my life has been pregnant of momentous traits and trials, how little dreamed, when, light as thistle-down, my hat was on my head, and the lord of my bosom rode buoyant on his throne!

What was darkly hinted, during my last literary protrusion, assumed a colossal guise shortly subsequent to them sad Arcadian occurrences. What with our first-born, and the earthquake which disseminated our bonnets to the wind, the temper of Mrs. Wignett, sedulously cloaked in honeyed garb, during the delusive hours when we kept maiden company, assumed its native imperative hue. Further, an aggravation of our felicity occurred, such, I sustain, is awarded to few;—an inmate, unforeseen, untold, and (without impolite violation) intolerable. Incaution had forborne to make me primarily acquainted with an extant sister to my life's partner; and little had I weened of such an apparition as the hydra in feminine frame who rose as if from ocean on the domestic hearth, the atmosphere of which was implacid enough ere Mrs. Molesey injected discords to the troubled waters. But such females, when out of place, is addicted to pouncing on their family ties at the precise junction when the storms of fortune darken on the orison. And so it was.

Though given out from herself she was a widow (as reverse to our proposition in the Emporium), the defunct Mr. Molesey was nothing above a mere vapour, whose profession no one had ever fathomed. No mortal eye had witnessed his exterior. Come what come may, whether fact or fiction—widow, or what is less precise—she had reached that goal when feminine expectations of double life to come must recede even in the most strenuous candidate, thus representing herself as commanding a competency amassed under protracted service in aristocratic situations, sisterly favour and gratification was bespoke in her predilection to form art and part in our family. "Your boy, Mary," said she, "shall reap from his aunt." A wilder and more pregnant invention distorts not the noble annals of even your fictions, sir.

* See A SERPENT IN ARCADIA, vol. xiv., p. 83.

Facts being these—though far be it from me to asseverate her being unequal to the mask, as a cook of second water—but her evil passions had driven her from post to pillar. Whether limited was the family, or her duties born out by two kitchen-maids and a confectioner (such as the Marquis of Bantry's establishment), agree and exist concordantly with her species she could not, however patient was them upper or under her. I have since heard say that at Sir James Powderoy's she extinguished herself above the ordinary of her flights by shying empty soda-waters at the butler, carried out by the employment of a dialogue, which I do not apologise for suppression of it. Enough: though I could heap kindred anecdotes by the myriad. The bottles pourtrays Mrs. Molesey (not at her worst) to an iota; and she did not falsify them, during the epoch of her sojourn, whereby my tranquil peace was left without redress.

Her footing was easy made good with one of us. She had but to lay the breaking up of the bonnets on our domestic threshold, and my conjugal partner hailed her with blank credentials as an oracle might be adopted with. To put me down became the joint team and meam of both their lives, as if it had been a page from the Whole Duty of Man. I mused, hoping the epidemic would blow over, and reluctions to credit that the grounds of Mrs. Wignett's partiality to me, which had excited matrimony, could, so soon like the hollow, prejudicious volcano, crumble beneath the airy tread of trusting credulity. Alas! hope is brittle company, as the song says.

Step by step, misgivings conglomerated. Firstly, Mrs. Molesey's money: it was locked up for the moment (Sir James Powderoy having instanced her to its disposition) in a Tubulous Bridge at Tobago. Dividends was to ensue another year; calls no more to come. The bridge was all of a piece with that Mr. Molesey, as was not to be found on this visual earth. Her dresses, again, was few and dubious of quality, and Mrs. Wignett's things was in universal request, else Mrs. Molesey could not have demeaned herself to frequent church (such being her regularity) otherwise as apparelled. Did my wife protest, when her satin cloak was called on (relict of Lady Maria), our mouths was stopped by our boy, and the harvest to be gleaned from the Tubulous Bridge of Tobago.

And my mouth in particular was stopped, whenever our boy opened his to scream, which was eternally night and day. You will own, sir, that a welcome little stranger is a domestic novelty more anxious than agreeable for a lively male parent to cope with under the calmest circumstances. Ours did scream, I repeat, superior to the top of any baby's bent ever seen or heard tell of, and spent as I was with hushing it to and fro, on my feet, the live-long night, "Mary," says I, "one of two conjunctures is this. Either Emporius" (such his allusive name) "will fracture a blood-vessel, if illness it be, or if wilful, a tap might initiate

his sense of duty, and suggest a period to them awful screeches of his." Sir, the two women they rose on me like French Revolutionary Furies. "Timothy," cried Mrs. Molesey, in a pitch of her own past diction to express, "no doubt you would prefer to see the last of the darling fair boy, you lazy, hulking rake, you! How should you not? You never had a man's courage to scream when you was in long-clothes or older, I warrant, and so we see what we see. Say that cold-blooded preposition again—do, I beg, and I'll show you what a tap is, if Mary does not. Not a shilling of my money shall you inherit so long as a single one beggar-man presides over a crossing in London, which is one comfort."

Cowed, I shrunk—for grown-up screamers outdoes infant lungs—and to collapse was my only course. But worse was left behind. Thirdly, her eating was perpetually fruitful with Mrs. Molesey as promoting dissent. Was peas, if tender or otherwise, the tapis, and I took their part; "Timothy," she would say, with a toss of scorn, to which Lady Macbeth was nothing, "a soft being like you has no right to opinions on what is mastification, and what is not." And never, till the end of the world, shall I cease to be scorched by her ironious expletions she launched that Friday, when I animadverted the neck of mutton as burnt to cokes, which is a touch beyond cinders, and inquired, "Would Sir James Powderoy's table support that?" having, I must add, in happier, pensive days, partaken of dishes many a cut above any of Mrs. Molesey's, whose slight-of-hand, in high cookery, amounts to nothing but inferior steps of the ladder.

My home became that awful precinct, its initial H, the same that rhymes with Swell. When I rushed abroad, on work or other intervals intent, I bore its marks on my own cheek and brow; and not merely as metaphor, but from nails as sharp as sin. That incident had occurred over a boiled chicken, a bird who ever heard speak of till then as fermenting family dissections?

Matters was at the worst ebb of domestical irritation, when I received an appeal from Mr. Bloxome, would I undertake a Disobedient Prophet, for a picture which he was musing. Bible stories were never congenial to my line. In my golden era, I might have shown demurage to the new proposal. Now, alas, five shillings an hour was an angel rarity—short and far between—and I repaired to the scene, without any appropriate sentiments, or willing taste; because, too, I had heard speak that Mr. Bloxome, under the best of leadings, was what, vulgarism—not me and you, sir, who never demean to slang—might denote a "rum bird."

Which, sir, I found him thus: beyond the limits of slang to shoot flying. He belonged to a cotery which, similar to the wicked, has flourished like the bean-stalk, on no better escutcheon than "Be as hideous earnest as never was; abuse all men and brothers of art, and horrid the fame of the past, and the posterity of

the future shall crown your meed." But, bless you, for one of them belligerous sect, Mr. Bloxome was as washy a looking party as ever I witnessed: with long whity-brown hair, equal divided on the top, which nothing could conduce into curls, and a mouth pursed up like a patron. And he was buttoned up, summer and winter, from his chin to his toes, in one of them unfeeling scanty black frocks, such as is the custom of Noah's arks, though mostly grey and green.

Sir, though he were as inadequate alike to disobedieny or abstract prophecy, as you and me are, Mr. Bloxome had gone the length of fitting up a desert in his back premises, with a floorcloth disposed mountainous, shred with sand and pebbles all the way from Hampstead, and an actual palm-tree, picked up cheap at Kew, owing to being repudiated from the houses, having perished of insects.

"And, Mr. Theodule," says he, on our first intercourse (my name in the orbit of art being Theodore), "you will be glad to hear that I am in position of the exact and separate robes of the Amekites of Mount Damascus, which have descended immaculate and without a stitch added or not, since Abraham and Sarah went among the Palestines to migrate."

"Theodore, sir, is my name," says I; "but I always meet wishes, and am glad to hear of Abraham and Sarah's clothes as correct, if so be it makes you easy and pleasurable."

"As to complexion," went on Mr. Bloxome, "we shall soon set that to rights compatible." And compelling me to divest, I was smeared down to the waist, and up to the armpits, with some stuff as sticky as treacle, but smelling venomous enough (as the great Hibernian known novelist denominates) to hang a hat on. Mr. Bloxome, sir, he steps back, before I was half dry, and surveys me. "This must suffice, in default of a better reason," was his remarks, with a sniff and a sigh; "and drapery may complete the denials of nature, and call up the typical East. Anyhow, Mr. Theodule, though too regular by half, you have not a common look."

"Theodore, sir, is my name," said I; "and I hopes the contrary."

But Mr. Bloxome did not hear me, being bowing just then over a trunk, as if it had been his Prayer-book.

"Mr. Theodule," says he, "here is the raiment. When you assume it, feel yourself—I pray feel—transported to prophetic climes."

"Theodore, sir, is my name," said I.

"Mr. Theodule," says Mr. Bloxome, "you were not engaged to talk, but to work and to concentrate. Here's the dress, and here's the cord for your waist, and here's the guard, correct from Jericho's stream. We will occupy the feet in the sandals another day."

Shall I ever forget them rubbish called robes he made me put about me: populated, too, as it were, to a pass which did not conduce to reverence or the composition of my faculties. But a model, however cramped or bitten, it is his duty to sit still and utter no sign.

And thus, sir, mysticated in that horrid greasy rug, with a visage nearer in tinting to a cast-off pair of old top-boots than my own natural bloom, I went back in my mind, when my toilette (assisted by lordly evasions) never entered the room without a buzz of emulation, even from others less circumstantiously advantageous in their position than "my Lord Timothy," erst my playful name. I was called back to the stern hour of life. "Mr. Theodule," said Mr. Bloxome, laying down his crayon-pencil, and staring as if he could see nothing, "this will not answer. It wants concentratiousness. A prophet has nothing to do with rounded contores, but should be Biblical and broad and mysterious with instinct reverence. You aim at Italian. Think of the truth of custom and climate, of the splendid and noble plains of the glowing East, Mr. Theodule. Concentrate, will you!" And Mr. Bloxome set to and sighed and sniffed again.

Instead, I bit my tongue with the patience of a camel, and turned up my eyes in an attempt at the ecstasy requested. "Too Italian, I repeat, Mr. Theodule," was my thanks from that pragmatic tyrant. Judge, sir, if I did not rove home that day with daggers in my bosom where gentle passions had till now been solely tenants at will.

"Mrs. Wignett," said I, when we was solo, "if them Tobago Tubulant Dividends does not turn up at a proximate quarter, I know them as shall cut and run, and not cut and come again."

Such, sir, is a bare cymbal and type of what I abode for a week to come. Every day Mr. Bloxome sighed and sniffed more and more, till at last, one Friday, the twenty-sixth, "Mr. Theodule," said he, "this will never do. No breadth, no intrusiousness! You are too, far too Italian."

Patience emerged from her monument. I bounced up from the rock, tipping over the palm-tree, I am happy to say, which it had been always groggy (as the low might call it).

"Italian to you Mr. Bloxome! only you will never reach such: nor even be tuneable or gracious in the most minutoust partiele. Here I have been a-slaving and a-grinning myself like a lonely Arab, and a-twisting my eyes into them postures regarding the whites as never may be mitigated right again, for aught I know; and what for? To be called out of my name by an imposture that never picture of his was seen in an aristocratic gallery! No, sir, the Profit for your money is him of the Dipper's dissuasion, as preaches on a Windsor chair in the Parks, till exiled by the police to Cow-cross. He's square and gashly enough, I hope, even for Prophets as bad as you; and such as him will sit till December for asking, to any one who will forestall their visages or canvas against future posterity. You are a born pair, only he can out-preach you, and he do not sniff like a grampus, with a cold in the nostrils. So I wash this filth off my face, and shake my shoes

in your dust, and say good morning, and good, good luck to you, Mr. Blockhead—in return for your Theodule.

"What's all this row about?" said a jolly voice, as it entered the tumultuous whirlpool: "come to see how you are getting on, Bloxome. What have you got here? A regular Choctaw, by Jove! Where did you pick him up?"

Passion's progress had ebbed into exhaustion.

"A jackdaw you may well entitle me; and I hopes I see you well, Mr. Stratford," said I, for it was that well-known gentleman.

"Hollo, my beauteous Theodore!" (Such had been my playful appalation among the painters when they was jocund.) "What's all this row? That was not you, I hope, I heard bawling matters to tatters on the stairs? Gad, it was loud enough for Lear!"

"Mr. Stratford," says I, stung into extraneous malignity and repartee, "it was not me as may have been noisy, but the Prophet of Disobediency, Mr. Bloxome. On receipt of my salary, sir," said I, turning to that minion as cool as the Pyramids, and buttoning my coat, "we part to meet no more on this side the waves of Time. Good morning."

"Stop, Theodore," said Mr. Stratford, as I was indulging in an exit of mixed scorn and impassive candour combined, "an idea strikes me. I suspect I can put something in your way. Look in to-morrow."

CHAPTER II.

MR. STRATFORD, to whom, polished reader, we now procede, is a gentleman of no common water;—one of them as popularises golden opinions, though, alas! they gathers no moss, and makes money by their pens. His antecedents had been neither few nor far between; but redolent of vicissitude. Natal fortune had bequeathed paternal wealth to his cradle of infancy—also a beauteous form, in heighth, however, superseding due proportion, being taller than your humble servant by two inches. Add to these personate graces a jocund humour, equal to make him king of his company, whether high or low, and no matter where, even to the point of cheering a fleet of passengers wrecked promiscuous on some bleak cape in the middle of ocean, with none of their little comforts about them. And few could boast his equality to havoc the bosoms of the fond, credulous fair.

What is life but a toy? a track whose stormy path even the Crimean sibyl could not decipher. Succinctly, Mr. Stratford, senior, came to grief; a more uncordial and dissolvent bankruptcy never was put in the papers, so said the Times. The crisis abstracted Mr. S., junior, from Oxford (where post-abits attests his studies there to this day), to buffet the scowls of adversity in life's tearful vale, and make the best of a hard bargain.

Shocks is no more than parables to the elastic. Where the dull herd would have drifted down to a pining shadow under such a blow, Mr.

Stratford said that, at last, comfort was his task and portion, since who could expect now liquefaction of his debts? There was plenty to abet his heroic gay sentiments—fond woman especially. He was launched in his struggle, I have heard him tell, by twenty pairs of slippers in the first six weeks (some raly valuable with bead-work). Mr. Stratford's airy scheme, however, tending to Hymen's vista, vanished into the fabrick of a vapour (as the Bard says). The fair sex can be insidious enough when jealousy and contempt point their senses; and his name was up and to spare as too miscellaneous. Flirting and slippers can come and go and no harm done, but the bonds of wedlock is another pair of shoes. He was foremost to laugh at the counterpoint which had ousted his prospects, and ready to take up new webs of existence as a matter of course, having no end to pick and choose from.

First the sphere was to be singing. The voice of a tenour was awarded to him by Nature, and his personal height, though too tall, and his populous connexion, aided the design. In the days of prosperity Mr. Stratford had been largely coveted by the aristocracy; and his ballads, with a guitar, or a cornet, also Luccia's farewell scene of frenzy, from that harrowing opera, were quoted (as I have eye-witnessed during one of my Lord's family) to be equal, if not supercedent, to any frenzy on the boards of any foreign theatre. Nay, and when he had to fall on himself, Mr. Stratford he was still equal the same asked out to dinner in the old haunts—to sing and bring his cornet, free gratis, since how could delicacy dream of proffering an I O U to one of themselves? But delicacy is a barren subsistence when quarter-day scowls on the scene. So Mr. Stratford (and his friends said it was so manly of him) condescended in the scale, and repaired to the managers. His overtures were received in unison. "Yes," said Mr. Twumley, whose flatteries were as well known as oil, "a lovely voice indeed, and so thorough-bread, my Lord!" And "To be sure," said Mr. Blight, who spoke his mind more illicit and outright, "a B in his chest, no doubt, but crude,—and the figure of figures for Lucretius Borgia." On such Mr. Stratford buoyed his hopes—and would begin his course, he said, to oblige Mr. Twumley, at only seventy pounds a week; and them as upheld him, and had not to pay, said was it not considerate letting himself go for an old song? But for all their encouragement tending to foment his spirits, when matters arrived at the scratch, other views asserted themselves:—and Mr. Twumley, and Mr. Blight, and even Mr. Sparrow (whose word is as good as his bond, which he never pays anybody), converged that Mr. Stratford owed it to himself to study for two years in Italy, before any treaties could be treated. Means not forthcoming, it became too sadly clear that a tenour voice can be merely a gossymer read to lean on, when the party is not up to the P's and Q's of the gambit of music.

But what matter? The more obelisks in his

path, the more Mr. Stratford laughed. He had other strings to his quiver.

Painting next rose on the orison as more superior genteel. From infancy's hour, he had shown propensious precocity. There is two kittens in esse by him framed, so early as three years: and every Prayer-book in the Stratford pue was covered over and over again with seditious quizzes of the clergyman, the clerk, and the beedle, with a hump on his back. Oils and waters, and black-lead and chalk, all came to him equal bold and promiscuous. "Dash away and never say die!" was his universal scheme and motto. And others joined the strain.

Well, when singing must be give up, Mr. Stratford flung himself on the easle as the bark which was to waft him to golden harbours. He laid in coats of armour, and remnants of glass brocade, and velvet as stood on end it was so rich, and potteras from Cynthian tombs, and China carpets, and all sorts of surprising curiosities as was the rage to cost fabulous. Dear or cheap, it was all one, since pay-day and he (he would brag), like crabbed youth and age, could never blend together—as subse-quential tradesmen experienced to their bitter cost. And he carried it off with a tune and a spirit. Birth and parentage cheered him on his way, while Envy shrugged and turned blue to learn that his exit into artistic profession commenced with nine various ladies of aristocracy—contentious as to which should be his first sitter.

But though Apollo smiled on Mr. Stratford's rush from the starting-post, the hangmen of the Academy objected to endorse his hopes. The Pleiad (such he called his nine ladies in one frame—his Pleiad of Muses) came back as it went; and, actuated to suspicion by the rebuff, the proprietors and relations of the fair originals agreed in a round robin of remonstrance that the pictures, one and all, was too unlike and audacious to occupy any spaces on ducal or other walls of the order, and could not be took in, did he not alter them terra firma, which is root and branch, and finish them in accordance. It was while bursting under the recoil of this withering doom, yet laughing dull care away, as if it had been a comic song, that Mr. Stratford, as I have said, came lounging in at that junction when Mr. Bloxome and me ruptured, from my inability to serve his preposterous and Bibliacal designs. And this, gentle reader, brings my sad story to its present point.

I complied to visit Mr. Stratford, as invited, the subsequent morning, innocent of the thunderbolt as had thrown all them pictures of the aristocracy back on their birthplace. I never see him more bounding and fluent than when showing them off.

"Mr. Stratford," says I, "I feel quite contrite and sympathetic at a fau-paw, so great and expensive as them nine ladies a-coming back all at once."

"Thank you, Theodore," said he, dropping his voice, and squeegeing my hand hard, "and

so help yourself to a glass of Shably. Don't spare it; it is not to be paid for till my nine pictures is finished."

I partook, to please him, and to pass things off.

"Theodore, my good fellow," said he, rousing himself like an arrow from a bow, "I might have known as painting would give me the sack, who never could grind at anything as was patient since I was a child."

"Sir," said I, "it is vulgar souls as grinds. Grinding and such as you don't run in harness."

"And such deuced slow work," he went on, as if studying to himself, "painting a set of ugly dolls, who all want to come out as so many beauties. Theodore, I am sick of the humbug of fine life."

"Sir," said I, "sickness tends to pass with the best of us, and bright hours will beam once more."

"Theodore," said he—(he knew my name was Timothy, but never presumed)—"you have been at them opera-books again!"

"Sir," said I, "History and Romance, when clothed by the poets in music's balmy spell, has ever been my treat."

"So much the better! By George! I will go in for it."

And judge, sir, of the ecstasy that thrilled my soul, recollecting that unpleasant couple at home (the hyena-in-law most particular), at the proposal as ensued. Fortunes had been made by entertainments one and all; and why not another—and who but he? And would I be his assistant or lowly partner, and remunerate at a fourth of the profits?—to commence in the provinces.

"Sir," says I, on fire, "what man can do, short of carrying a board such as stalks down Regent-street by the baker's dozen when novelties is to be circulated, will I do to elicit confidence and enhance the entertainment, even to the point of valleying you, which I declined some years ago, in any client short of a titled object."

"Take another pull at the Shably, Carroway, my boy."

And on this he promulgated: while I sat lapped in a maze of delight to hear the scene he unfolded. Among other arrows in his bow Mr. Stratford enumerated Prestigation. His tricks with cards was not to be believed in, even by them as they were elucidated to. And he boasted his toes was as flexuous as his fingers at rapping. "We'll have the spirits in, Theodore," he said.

"Sir," said I, "where you come, spirits must pervade. If ever there was a 'Life let us cherish' in flesh and blood, you are that propitious mortal."

"Bravo, Theodore," said he, drinking freely. "Then why should not I give Twenty Minutes from the Poets? Nothing like variety; and I can read and roll my eyes, and ogle the old maids and widows quite as well as some as spouts in pulpits and out of pulpits."

Then singing there was to be, and ballads was discussed; with cornet or without. I voted for Lady Maria's Bird in the Hand (a sweet lay, as I had often heard *ankoryd* at my Lord's while disseminating ices), but he would not hear of such. Afterwards clastic poseys from various sources, and in these I was to take a part; also to draw the bills of the entertainment, and assume the active and intimate duties of such. We was to rehearse every day, till we could meet as perfect strangers before the public eye. When all was stipulated, I repaired to my bitter fireside of home, though my females they both was more caustical than usual (Mrs. Molesey to the length of wondering why male scrubs as did nothing save eat victuals and dress themselves like heroes and opera-dancers, cumbered the ground of industrial families).

What with two or three little jobs, such as fancy Demons, and Bandits calling for no intellect, I tided over the time while Mr. Stratford and me was in incumbency of our entertainment. My wife, too, had sources which she veiled, and said bonnets was flowing back to her. So be as she asked for no money, I let matters flow their course. Them was happy weeks, allowing for a few checkers.

Which was these: arising from Mr. Stratford's digressions of spirits over the future task before us. At first all was life and hope and merry sayings about the winks and signs and other confederations we was to concur in over the tricks; and if so be I was not equal to the mark at once, he was patience and chaff personified. "Theodore," he would say, "try again. We must do more with our wit than our beauty."

"Yours, sir," I would reply. "Mine has been only harassing unfortunate to me in the mainspring of my life."

But, day by day, Argus himself could not have helped seeing how close Mr. Stratford barred his doors.

"Not at home, Theodore," to any figure short of a hundred thousand pounds," he would say; but the old heart was out of his laugh, which neither freshened his hand nor steadied his memory. At which he became all touchiness, begging excuses the instant afterwards; also, becoming paler every day, of which I thought nothing, since life in a horrid close back room, never going to the window, can have but one issue. One Friday, when he had been straining his nerves to fits, a-rehearsing some of them locus pocus, and while my poor head was humming round like a top, with fixed application to the duties of his postures, which was to believe what my eyes never see, and ask stupid inquiries tending to lead others on:—"Theodore," said he, stopping, slapping his forehead, with a word as begins with D, and rhyming to patience's Damb, "this is no go, unless one has been brought up to it. Only wretched amateur work at best."

"Sir," said I, "amateurs is all in all in many elegant spheres, and the glass of Fashion will drown in oblivion all short-goings and indirect-

ness in conjuring, or such entertainments as is thorough-bread."

On which Mr. Stratford let fly, like the last scene of a tragedy. What he uttered about false parental indulgencies was as pregnant as gospel. "Why did they bring me up to nothing?" he cried again and again, tramping up and down the room. "Why did they teach me nothing properly? Yonder is the glass, Theodore. Open that fresh bottle, fill it, and leave me to myself. I'm ill; I'm dead beat; I can do no good or bad to-day."

"Sir," said I, "let humble sympathy assert her part, if so be you feel low." But I see that my begging to stay would only make him worse; so I made believe he was funning me, and left his home with a heavy heart.

But funning he was not, pleasing reader. Truth was in these words of his, I have since submitted, if ever Truth be found at the lower part of a well (to quote the song). For let Reason assume her sway, and Amateurs stand confest, as making up with make-believe beyond the adoption of any as must get their bread, without false miasmas floating round them. Returning to my own departed station, I ask you, sir, whose penetratious eye is as potent as your ridiculous sensation of the sublime, what would become of your plate—I wish with all my heart it was gold—if Amateurs cleaned it? Does one in a thousand know that rouge gives the best lustre, which is merely a drop in the bucket as is to be attended to? And if Plate, why not music and conjuring tricks, as requires the flight of Time to ripen? I have heard speak that there is tumblers and tight-rope dancers as have begun to tumble before they could talk. Billiards, again, like Rome, is not built up in a day. But truce to morality.

In the brooding evening, I gets one of his quizzical notes from Mr. Stratford, saying as how he was going to change the air for a few days, and would write when he came back. Why did no glooming oracle whisper in my ear, it was not days so much as nights he meant, and with whom the nights was spent? Only them omens is poor useless creatures—a bad lot, as has no sense, and is good for nothing till things has happened.

Yet it was with a heavy heart, as I addicted myself to arranging the bill agreed on—premissing as Mr. Stratford, determined to rend every link as might recal his high connexions, had died his hair, and was growing a beard, and had his cards printed as Signor Bello-pietra, meaning, in Italian, Beautiful Stone. When he had explained it, "Sir," said I, "here's something as it should be, not of every one's sort, a downright duck of a name, I call it, for a gem of a gentleman."

"Timothy," said he, almost the last time I ever heard that sweet laugh of his, "take you care! your wit is getting too extensive."

"Mr. Stratford," was my reply, "good company only impares them as is weak, as ever I heard speak of." And the little joke had dropt.

But it rung in my ear, candied reader, all the while I was penning what was agreed on, as follows:

SIGNOR BELLO-PIETRA.

MYSTERY! UNNATURAL PHYSICS! THE BARD'S THRILLING SPELL! MUSIC! AND THE MUTUAL ANTIQUE GRACES!

Sig. Bello-pietra, with the aid of M. Theodore, will have the honour of introducing to Aristocracy, Science, and the Populous Element, the following unheard-of entertainments.

The Cards of Orientious Sorcery:—which Signor Bello-pietra will enter into any game, with any cards, and any party, and for any stakes—his back turned, and his eyes scrutinously blinded by a jury of unquestioned ladies—Sig. B. P. will call the winning cards.

The Loquacious Table, equal of giving any information as is requisite by them prepared to receive. The code of raps to be varied nightly, and agreed on by Sig. B. P. and them as holds stall tickets. N.B. No spirituous pretences adduced as the medium.

Twenty Minutes with Choice Authors: Take Heed how you Walk, by a Proverbious Philosopher. The Song of the Chemise, and Blow Bugle, by the Lorient (with royal permission), also a scene from Little Dorrit, with a mute tableau by Mr. Theodore, D.B.—D.C.—D.E.F. of homé and foreign academics.

Song, Come out of the Harbour my only Anne (thirteenth edition), executed by Signor Bello-pietra with a guitar, who will afterwards perform the Cornet Polka on the cornet.

TO CONCLUDE WITH

Diana and Erasmus the Fawn (see Homer's Commentaries), gesticulated in six pictures from Pompey's ruins by Signor Bello-pietra—no Fawn of analogous height being in Sculptores nomenclator—assisted by Mr. Theodore, whose personation of the Virgin Monarch has elicited testimonials from the most authoritative sources as chaste and tearful—which no other Diana has been anything but a PALTRY IMITATION.

GOD SAVE OUR GRACIOUS QUEEN!

AND
COME EARLY!!!

You will join me, honoured sir, that here *was* a bill; I panted for Mr. Stratford's return, secure of approval beaming from his jovial features. But a week ebbed, nine days, ten, and dead silence boded over all. On the eleventh—if there was ever a stuffy Sunday evening, and all the West-end like a stuffy Simoon, that Sunday was that Sunday. Expectation could no longer brook. To the well-known chambers did my throbbing heart repair, and without parly admitted (no common favour to Mr. Stratford's visitors, if otherwise than apointed), and asked to wait for an instant in the outer room.

I had but sate a moment or so, when a cata-ract of terror seized me in its scorching gripe; and expectation's beaming spell was broken by

a shot, no horror can extraneously depict. Bland reader, judge of my sentiments. They was talking loud in Mr. Stratford's room, him and some party else. For a moment I conceived myself victim to some fiendish pellucidation. My brain throbbled, my pulses swam. It could not be! I charged the door; and, sir, there, sitting at his ease, pale, with his glass before him and his cigar (did not I know by heart his sickening conceited way of puffing out the smoke and turning up his eyes?), opposite to the infatuated Mr. Stratford sate my bane, my horror—that unprincipled dragon whose poisons had twice ravaged a trusting cousin's felicity—that inhuman and sneering animal, Mings.

Inured as I was of late to higher aims and ends of society and behaviour, I should have passed the now historical Area Sneak and Arcadian Serpent, so justly placarded by you, sir, with the frozen defiance as is vermin's ample due, had not limits overflowed, by his trying to laugh it off, as he said,

"Ah, Timothy, my tulip, who expected to meet you here? Is Mrs. Wignett and the baby in force? You may tell 'em I am above bearing malice; and so my compliments to her, and love to my godson, and wished to know how they was a-getting on."

"Mings," said I, "sniggering audacity never semented a bad cause, nor healed perjury, not as I heard of. Keep yourself to yourself. Mr. Stratford, sir, I hopes you are favourably in a state of revival by your little trip." And I sat down over against Mr. Stratford, making no more of that mean imposture than if he had been a fire-iron.

"Mr. Belville," said Mr. Stratford, but not in his most natural easy manner, "Mr. Theodore and I have some mutual matters to discuss. When the cab comes, let me know." And as that silver-tongued and suspicious adder seemed unwilling to quit the scene, poor Mr. Stratford went across to him, and they talked a little whisperously. Then the bisilask left the room.

But during their duett of two I had noticed woful changes. Mr. Stratford, worn to a penurious shadow, impelled by fever, and his chambers *ditto*. Not a tittle of their splendid acuterments and subjects of taste was left. Even the hookey of other days and cockatoo in her cage were made away with. Bare walls stared around, and a portmanto and hat-box ready libelled on the floor.

"Theodore," said Mr. Stratford, twitching like a haspin, "did you not get my letter? But, hang it! no, you have believed in me, and I won't humbug you. I should have written, but had not the art to do it. What use in going on with that pack of stuff, save to make conjoint

asses of ourselves? I'm off to Baden-Baden to-night."

I felt all them colours of the rainbow. My teeth chattered, and heads or heels might have been uppermost, such was the rush of appalling sensations! "Off, Mr. Stratford?" faltered I, feeling as sure as if Belshazzar had writ it on the wall, from what quarter this acute and crushing loss of all I held dear had emanated. "Off, Mr. Stratford? If so be I could have the honour——"

But he waived his hand to put me to a full stop, and went on: "I have no time now—I'll write—and when I make my fortune, you shall be the better for it! And, by Jove! Carro-way," rousing a faint attempt at pristine jocularity, "I *shall* make my fortune this time. Meanwhile, here's a twenty-pound note I was a-putting up for your time and trouble." And pulling a ring from his finger, "Wear this to remind you of a poor profligate, and keep steady. Now, Mr. Belville"—for the rattle of the honeyed reptile was heard at the door—"is time up? Lend a hand with them traps." And they both got up the luggage between them, and was down-stairs, and the cab was drove off while I sat staring on the bank-note in my hand, and the cornelius ring set in raly good gold on the table by the empty bottles. I began to cry like a senseless baby, as if so be my heart would burst. Stratford, with all thy faults, *etceteror!*

From that moment to this I have not heard a word what became of that poor showy sweet-tempered Amiteur and hero of Fortune's spite, and many disheveled pleasing talents, calculated to amuse. But disciosurés disclosed as how he and that Mings had made midnightly acquaintance in one of them haunts, masqued by insidious sigars in a front shop, which is frequent dens of hope and despair in the vicinity of a certain square with a titled name. Which had lost and which had won I could never make out, but that the fiend had established a confidential ascendancy over the sanguine partner of mine as was near having been, was true: also that they set off in fatal company conjointly imbued with some indefeasible scheme of rupturing foreign Banks. But I would greet the scaffold in the conviction that Mr. Stratford had too much of the heart of honour in his bosom to stoop to the slimy depth of sharp play and foul practice. Though an Amiteur, he was an unmitigated gentleman, and them as is such militates the most deeply against themselves.

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